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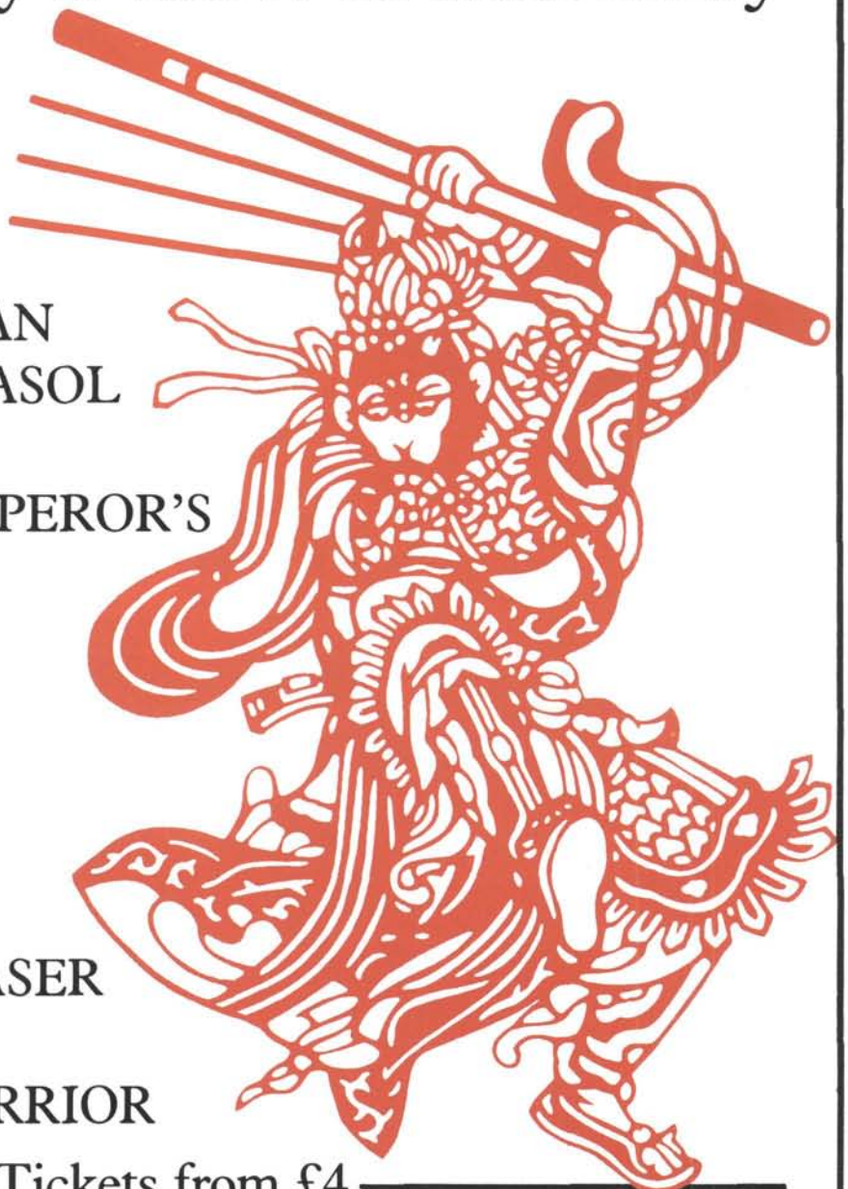

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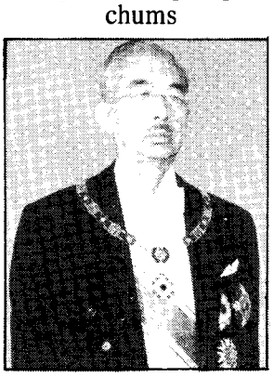

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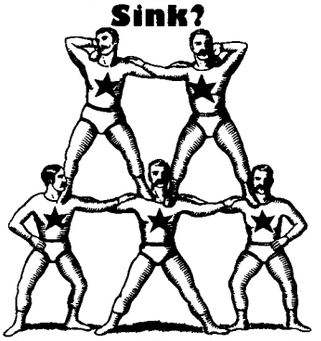

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Mary Evans

Unseasonally Adjusted Figures

England has now had five 'warmer than average' Decembers in a row. In January this year, the Argentinian economy teetered on the brink of collapse as drought and heatwave caused demand for electricity for air-conditioning to soar while reservoirs dried up and hydro-electric power stations ground to a halt. In 1988, severe drought in the US Midwest focused attention on the fact that the 1980s had become the hottest decade, in terms of global average temperatures, ever recorded – although, admittedly, the records only go back a little over 100 years. Is this all 'just one (or several) of those things'? Or is it the infamous greenhouse effect at work?

After years of fence-sitting, the climate experts are now beginning to stand up and be counted. In testimony to the US Congress last summer, researchers such as Jim Hansen, of Nasa, said that we can indeed lay the blame at the door of the greenhouse effect, a warming of the world caused by human activities. And on this side of the Atlantic Mick Kelly, of the University of East Anglia, testified to the same effect, on behalf of Friends Of The Earth, to a Commons select committee. By the autumn, Margaret Thatcher was telling the Royal Society that the greenhouse effect is a major cause for concern, and since then many government spokespeople have hurried to echo her sentiments – although precisely *no* action to do anything about the problem seems to be planned.

Why should any action be contemplated? Wouldn't a warmer world be a nicer place to live? Maybe – if you live in Britain. The news is not so good in southern Spain, Greece, Ethiopia, Argentina or even the heartland of the United States. The main reasons why climate has become a political issue are that the world is likely to get too hot, too quickly, and that the transition into the greenhouse state will be accompanied by extreme weather events of all kinds.

The world is warming because of a build-up of gases in the atmosphere released by human activities. Carbon dioxide, from burning fossil fuel, represents half the problem. The rest is due to compounds such as the CFCs that are also responsible for the destruction of the ozone layer, methane from agricultural activities, and nitrous oxide from vehicle exhausts. So far, the global mean warming since the 19th century amounts to just 0.5° Celcius. But projections of the continuing build-up of these gases, which trap heat that would otherwise escape into space, point to a further warming of 0.5°C by the year 2000, and a warming of perhaps 3°C by 2030. The world will then be warmer than at any time for at least 120,000 years. South-east England will have a climate like that of southern France today; the south of France will resemble North Africa; southern Spain will be a desert.

As the world warms, sea level will rise at a rate of about a centimetre a decade. It sounds small – but it will mean that the Thames Barrier will have to be modified before the middle of next century to prevent catastrophic flooding of London. Researchers at the University of East Anglia predicted almost 10 years ago that during the early stages of the warming changes in the circulation patterns of the atmosphere will bring more frequent 'blocking high' systems over England. That means more hot summers, but it also means more frequent severe blizzards in winter. Three recent severe winters in five amply bear out that prediction.

As the oceans warm, hurricanes, which are driven by warm oceanic water, will become more common and more severe. In the 1970s, there was an average of nine hurricanes per year. In the 1990s and beyond, we can expect at least twice as many, and some of these will be more severe than anything experienced in recent decades. The catastrophe that hit Nicaragua late in 1988 was not an isolated incident, but a sign of things to come.

But some people may benefit from the greenhouse effect. As climate zones in the northern hemisphere shift northward, and (eventually) winters become less severe, the Soviet Union may be able to produce far more grain than it does today, just at the time when the United States experiences a return to dustbowl conditions. For decades, a feature of the world food market has been that the US is a major exporter of grain, while the USSR has been one of its best customers. It would be interesting, to say the least, if the roles were reversed. Rest assured, you haven't heard the last of the greenhouse effect. ●

John Gribbin

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Berry's City Blues

At first sight the sorry saga of Blue Arrow and the County NatWest merchant bank looks like yet another cautionary tale of an over-ambitious in-dustrialist and corruption in the City of London. But the repercussions of the Blue Arrow affair reverberate beyond the narrow boundaries of London's financial markets. For it illustrates the damage that a weak and increasingly corrupt stock market can do to British industry.

Before the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) investigation into Blue Arrow's takeover of Manpower, the US employment agency, the story of the company and its founder, Tony Berry, read like a Thatcherite fairy tale come true.

Berry is the sort of industrialist that Mrs Thatcher likes best. He founded Blue Arrow in the 1970s with a redundancy pay-off and turned it into the biggest employment agency in Britain. And, like George Davies the architect of Next and another fallen idol, he charmed the City with his barrow-boy banter, lavish lunches and fat fees from his numerous financial deals. Blue Arrow became one of the fastest-growing members of the fast-growing service sector. It was the sort of business which is important to an economy where high unemployment and a declining trade union movement have enhanced a need for casual labour.

For a while everything went well. In the days when the stock market was buoyant Blue Arrow expanded rapidly by buying a series of businesses. By the summer of 1987, only three years after going public, its stock market value had risen from £3m to £400m and Norman Tebbit had joined its board. When Berry saw an opportunity in August 1987 to take over Manpower, probably the world's biggest employment agency, he jumped at it.

Frank Spooner

A bullish mood in the city. But can they bear to get their fingers burned?

The only hitch was that the City was no longer quite so keen to pay for his deals by buying Blue Arrow's shares. The deal was too ambitious and the mood of the City was becoming less confident. The share issue flopped. So did the subsequent issue which County NatWest organised as an emergency measure. The second flop was enormously embarrassing for County NatWest. The City had become increasingly competitive since the Big Bang in 1986. County needed a successful issue to impress the other 'Blue Arrows' that might provide future deals. County and its cohorts tried to cover up the flop by buying the unsold shares. When the stock market crashed in October 1987, Blue Arrow's share price halved and the shares were virtually unsaleable. Enter the DTI investigators.

So far so messy. The Thatcherite fairy tale came unstuck. Tony Berry lost his job. But what of Blue Arrow itself?

The company's share price is so weak and its reputation so muddied that it has no hope, in the foreseeable future, of raising money for further expansion from the City. Moreover, Blue Arrow's management has been so preoccupied by its City traumas that it has, on its own admission, been distracted from running the business. Manpower in the US is in such disarray that its franchisees have staged a revolt.

It can be argued that Blue Arrow has blundered into a mess of its own making. Yet there are dozens of other companies stuck in the same trap of weak share prices in a depressed stock market: unable to expand and too preoccupied by terror of a takeover to concentrate on developing their businesses. The Blue Arrow *debacle* illustrates the danger of a deregulated financial system where deals are done simply because they are financially feasible rather than on the basis of wider economic or social concerns. There are numerous other companies that have expanded too far and too fast, although British industry has been spared the horrors that leveraged buy-outs (or LBOs, where groups of investors borrow huge sums of money to buy businesses) have caused in the US.

The US industrial landscape is littered with the carcasses of companies that have sold off subsidiaries and scrapped research projects for no reason other than to pay off the interest on their LBO debts. The social cost is incalculable. Jobs have been lost and communities destroyed. Yet Wall Street's appetite for LBOs is unabated. So much so that last autumn KKR, a New York investment firm with only 50 full-time employees, became the fifth-biggest US industrial corporation through a $25billion LBO for the Nabisco food group. Wall Street pocketed about $1billion in banking fees.

The bidding and counter-bidding over GEC, combined with Mrs Thatcher's *laissez-faire* attitude to the City and industry, suggests that the first British LBO may not be far away. And if the City of London does plummet to the depths of Wall Street then the sorry saga of Blue Arrow may seem somewhat tame. ●

Alice Rawsthorn

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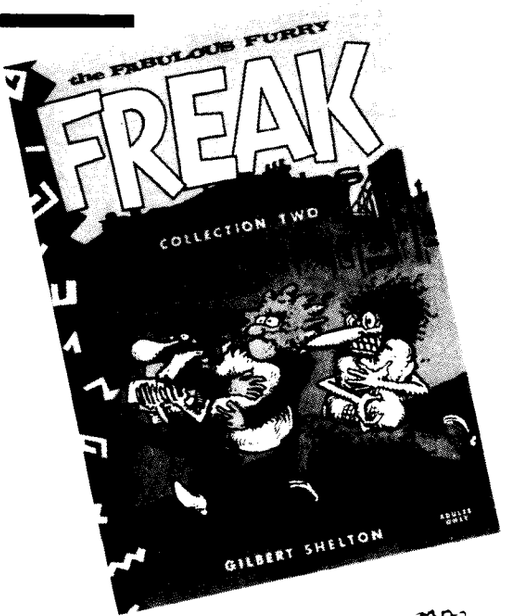

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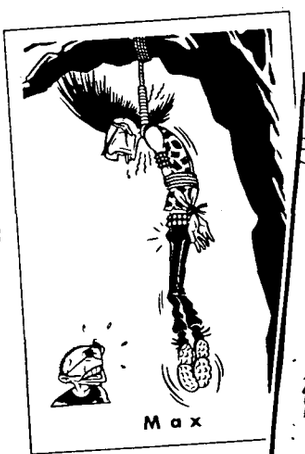

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Doctor's Pressure Points

Recent publicity about junior hospital doctors' marathon hours of work has resulted from a five-year campaign by the Medical Practitioners' Union (MPU – part of the MSF trade union) to reduce hours of work by statute. The sponsored bill is currently before the House of Lords. Why do such working practices – a system reminiscent of Victorian public-school fagging – exist in the 1980s?

Despite the advent of the NHS in 1948, pre-existing practices, in which junior doctors are the *de facto* employees of consultants, persist today. In every district general hospital in the country, teams of three or four doctors work directly for one or two consultants, and receive teaching from the consultant or one of the more senior doctors in the team.

This system descends directly from the 19th-century practice of doctors receiving training in exchange for their labour. 'Juniors' were responsible for the 24-hour care of patients with no time off except with consent of the consultant, and only if the individual could arrange cover for the consultant's patients. To the present day, a similar system is judged by the profession to be useful in the development of doctors, and is bolstered through tacit agreement between the profession and the NHS administrative hierarchy over the years. It has provided a very cheap source of highly-skilled labour and relieved hospital administrators of responsibility to ensure adequate staffing levels.

On an individual level, the system reinforces doctors' belief in ourselves as 'super individuals' and helps to reduce self-doubts about effectiveness. Collectively, the long hours have become a rite of passage into a semi-monastic world: completing a complex process of socialisation started at medical school, which makes the profession introspective, secretive, paternalistic and individualistic. Some of the most talented school leavers are thereby turned into doctors whose systems of thought and action make them totally unsuited to the multidisciplinary health teams which should be the norm in the health service in the late 20th century.

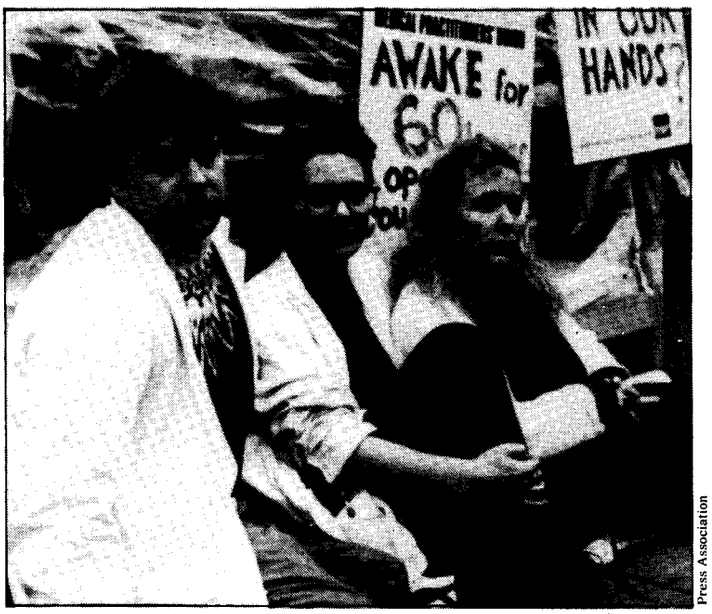
The political process which has led to British Medical Association (BMA) support for a trade-union sponsored bill is an interesting one. It started with an MPU campaign, 'Action on Hours', in the late 70s, which gained gradual support and membership for MPU in the early 1980s. In 1984 it was decided to campaign for a statutory maximum 60-hour week, and more importantly to become more active in the BMA-dominated medico-political machinery. All doctors in this country, whatever organisation they belong to, have their terms and conditions of service negotiated by 'craft committees' which are serviced by the BMA. The BMA is thus able to throw a mantle of consensus over the profession and claim sole negotiating rights for doctors.

Since 1985 the MPU has gradually increased its influence in the junior doctors' craft committee and has argued its case strongly at district hospital level. Finally this year, an overwhelming majority in the craft committee voted in favour of legislation. The BMA was forced to follow or risk its reputation as the voice of doctors.

The opponents of a legal limit on working hours have been arguing that hours can only be reduced by a very large increase in the number of junior hospital doctors. This is not true, based as it is on the continuation of current working practices.

In future, there must clearly be a move to more flexible working practices, involving planning of doctors' work to meet need. This will involve greater use of shift systems and involvement of other health workers in extended roles. ●

Rob Hughes



Press Association

Young Doctors: Snatching some protest during their 60-hour shift

Dogged By Design

As Crufts dog show rolls around again, consider that many dogs literally owe their lives to their owners. The pursuit of fashion has taken some breeds so far down the road of specialisation that they cannot survive without human help.

Champion bulldogs, almost all born by caesarian section. Bloodhounds whose melancholy eyes can fester a suppurating mess. Docked tails that prevent a dog expressing itself fully. Hidden defects too, like the collies that slowly lose their sight or the psychotic temperament that turns some breeds into walking, growling time-bombs.

There was a time, not so long ago, when a dog's characteristics were part of its function. The bulldog's fearsome jaw and squashed-in face allowed it to clamp its teeth into a bull while still being able to breathe. Bulldogs were admirably suited to the job of bull baiting, but when the 'sport' was outlawed in 1835 the breed almost became extinct. It was saved by fanciers, who laid down the standards against which all bulldogs were to be judged, and thus created the problem.

The standard used to say that a bulldog's head should be as large as possible. Alas, it said nothing about the puppy's head being small enough to pass through its mother's pelvis. Hence the need for caesarian sections.

The Kennel Club has now changed the standard. Heads must not now exceed a maximum size. But the bulldog breeders are big-headed enough to reckon they can do without the Kennel Club and Crufts. So what if the best bitches have to suffer a caesarian for every litter?

Not all the defects that dogs are subject to can be laid directly at the door of standards. Some are the result of too much inbreeding from too few winners. But all could be eliminated by more enlightened judges and breeders.

The real difficulty seems to be that for many people dogs have become objects that perform some task – winning prizes, guarding property and person, or whatever – not creatures with whom to share a relationship. It doesn't have to be one or the other. Many working dogs are also boon companions, but if more people would see their dogs as subjects the animals would be much better off.

I have just read all this to Sam, who has a pedigree as long as your arm, and he agrees. ●

Jeremy Cherfas

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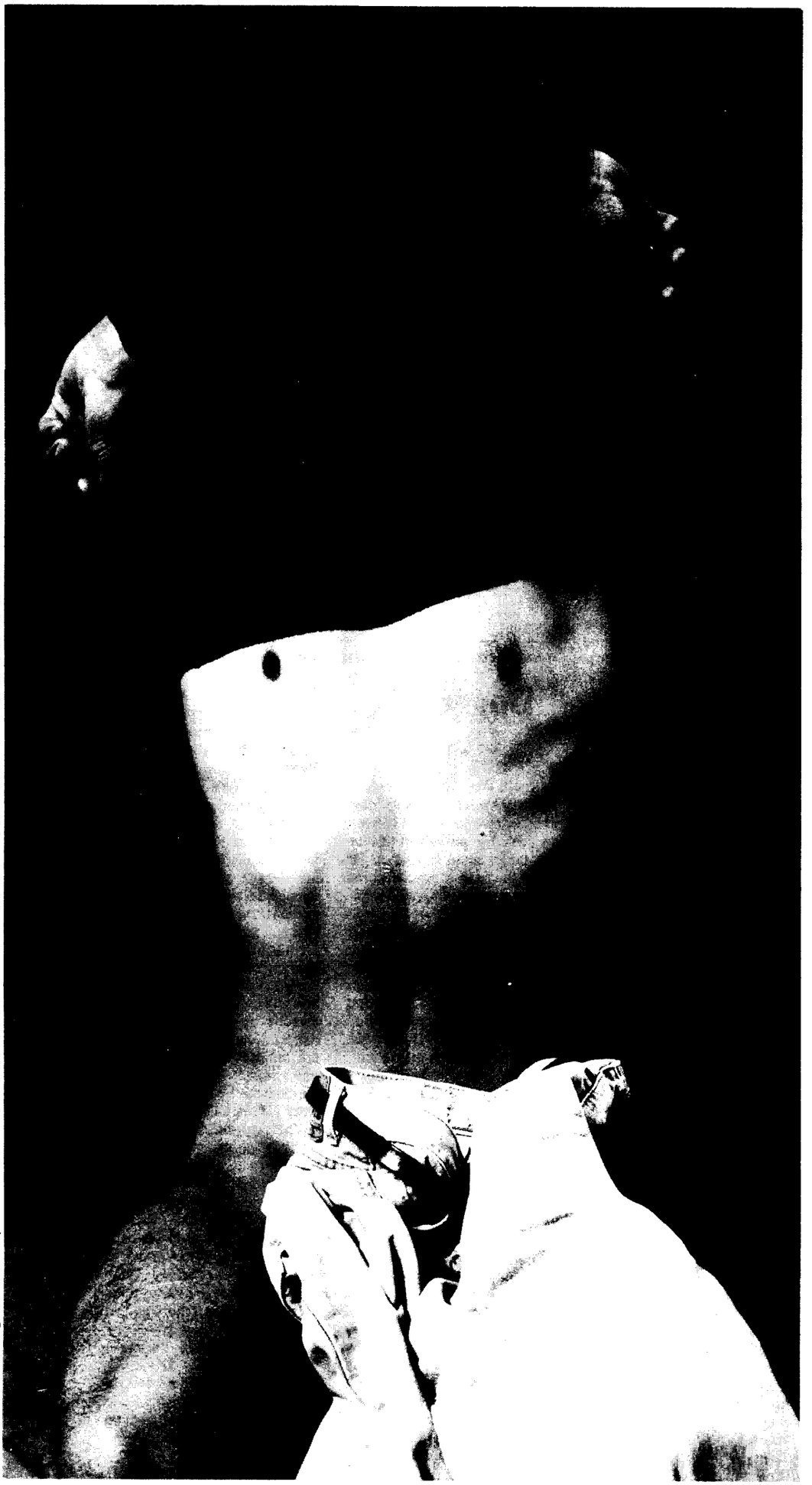

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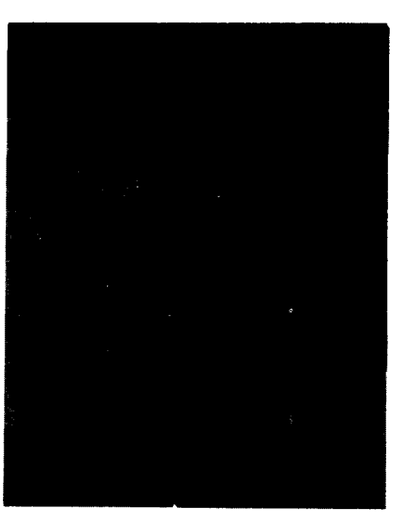

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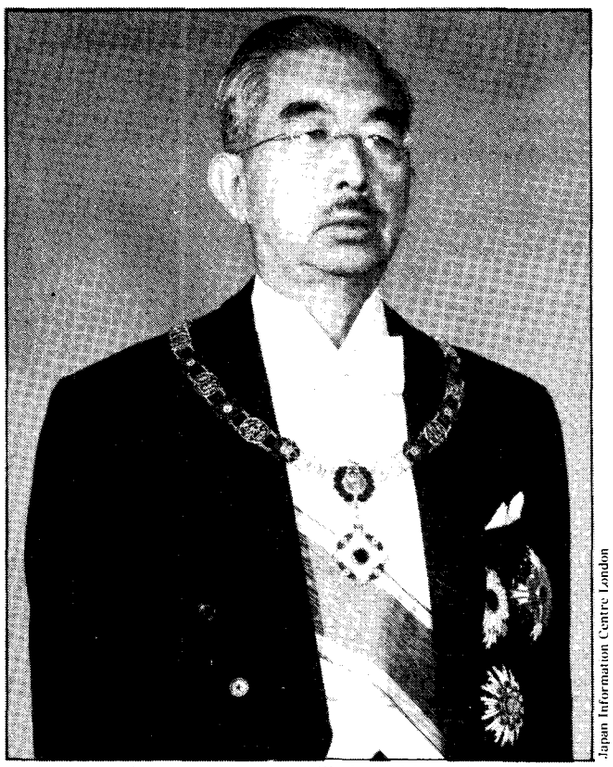
A New Imperial Measure

It was almost too convenient to have been natural. By expiring early on Saturday morning Emperor Hirohito caused minimum disruption to the nation he left behind. The financial markets had to close that morning, but Saturday only ever sees light trading anyway. Banks, railways and printers had all of Sunday to reprogramme their computers and ticket machines to the new era *Heisei*. There is the strong suspicion that the emperor was allowed to die at a time that best suited those who remained, especially the conservatives.

For several years now those on the Left in Japan have feared that the death of Hirohito would provide the hawks within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the ultra-nationalist Right with the chance to revive old ideas about the nature of the Japanese state and the role of the Emperor within it. Politicians such as former prime minister Nakasone, have made no secret of their desire to revise the constitution which was imposed on Japan by the Americans in 1946 to eliminate its 'alien' nature. At least they wish to remove the 'peace clause' in which Japan renounces 'the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes'. Others would like to see the emperor becoming more central to the constitutional apparatus.

In June there has to be an election to the weaker of the two houses that make up Japan's parliament – the House of Councillors – and a general election to the House of Representatives has to be held before mid-summer 1990. The opposition parties must fear that the LDP will seek to use the wave of interest in the imperial institution to improve its image in the eyes of the electorate. This is all the more important in view of the damage to the LDP's reputation caused by the revelations in late 1988 and early this year that several of its leaders including the minister of finance had made large profits from insider dealing. The *Recruit* scandal had dominated the front pages since late November and the opposition had used the controversy to force policy concessions from the government.



Japan Information Centre London

The Emperor's new clothes, or still the old imperial mystique?

The opposition parties can be divided into three groups: the centre-Left consisting of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP – 6% of the popular vote at the last general election) and the Clean Government Party (CGP – 9%) an offshoot of a lay Buddhist organisation; the Japan Socialist Party (JSP – 17%) and the Japan Communist Party (JCP – 8%). Weak and divided, the opposition's best chance of attacking the LDP and reducing its electoral popularity has always been on the occasions of the scandals which surface every few years. Their task over the next few months will be to prevent the LDP from dominating the political arena through manipulation of the new emperor.

It is the Communist Party which has shown most implacable opposition to the emperor system. Their newspaper (*Akahata* Red Flag, daily sales around 500,000) has in the past few days reminded its readers that the former emperor bore ultimate responsibility for the aggressive war in Asia and the suppression of human rights in pre-war Japan. In addition they have refused to attend any of the ceremonies held by the new emperor. The JSP has concentrated its attention on urging that the religious (Shinto) aspects of the funeral be kept separate from the political. To mix the two, it argues, runs contrary to the spirit of the constitution which requires the state to remain aloof from religious matters. The two centre-left parties meanwhile have indicated they will attend all the ceremonies to be held over the next few weeks and have offered little criticism of their form or content.

The early indications are that the worst fears of the Left are unwarranted. In his first public speech the new emperor, Akihito, echoed the government line that his father had 'prayed for world peace and the welfare of his people' but he also pledged himself to uphold the constitution. This would seem to weaken the position of those on the Right who would like far-reaching constitutional revision which would place more power in the hands of the emperor. The death of Hirohito may have destroyed the mystique surrounding the imperial institution. Already *Spitting Image*-type dolls of the UK queen have been shown on Japanese television – perhaps indicating a new wave of openness of criticism of the Japanese royals.

But there is still a long way to go. It will be over a year before the formal enthronement of the new emperor, Akihito. Media attention is bound to be focused on him throughout this time. Progressive groups in Japan will have a hard time making their voices heard. ●

Ian Neary

Marxism Today Coming Next Month

In our March issue, **Geoff Mulgan** looks at the evolution of the city and **Richard Rogers** writes exclusively for *MT* on Prince Charles and the modern city.

Plus: **Sarah Benton** on the decline of the political party, **Nicci Gerrard** on the changing character of women's writing, and an interview with **Ricardo Lagos**, a leading figure of the Chilean opposition.

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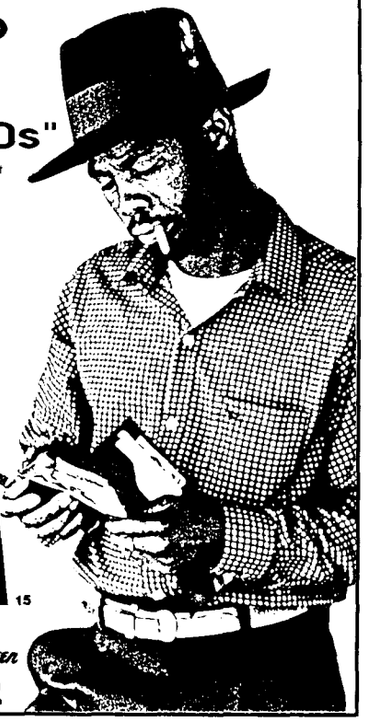

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Spells In The Snow

Faced with an unseasonal absence of snow, John McCarry takes time out to reflect from the Scottish Highlands on the personal pleasures of skiing and the practical implications of the pastime's rapid spread in popularity

There are many pleasant ways to spend new year, but sitting with a glass of whisky gazing along Loch Garry in the north-west of Scotland must be one of the finest. When you add convivial company and good food you could ask for nothing more.

Nothing that is, apart from snow, it opens up a whole new world for outdoor-minded people. Climbers and walkers revel in atrocious conditions, pitting themselves against the terrain and weather and taking great pride in their independence and endurance. And then of course there are the skiers.

Now for years I hated skiers. Like many fellow hill-walkers I felt that they symbolised affluence and arrogance. We scoffed at their all-in-one designer dayglo suits. 'Moon' boots were guaranteed to produce snorts of ill-concealed laughter. Journeys to the hills became fraught with tension as the BMWs and Volvos swept past, heading for Glenshee or Aviemore. We felt that they abused the hills with their machinery and litter, creating problems of erosion and cocking a snook at the awesome weather problems that can prevail on Scottish mountains.

Eventually, however, I was persuaded to try a pair of cross-country skis and almost immediately I was hooked. They differ from the standard 'downhill' skis in two fundamental ways. Firstly they are much thinner and slightly longer, and secondly you are attached to them only at the toe, which allows you a much greater range of movement. A slight variation on this type of ski is used for ski-touring, slightly broader and with metal edges and heavier leather boots allowing greater control. With the addition of artificial 'skins' in the soles of the skis (rather like a cat's fur) you can ski uphill as well as down.

One has the freedom denied to the British downhill skier, who is limited by the length of runs and access to the slopes allowed by the current state of the sport. Fine as they are, the Scottish mountains are just not as high as on the continent, so not much can be done about increasing the length of runs.

Access to the slopes is a different matter. Demand for skiing has been steadily expanding, currently at about 7% per year, and this places a corresponding strain on existing facilities and roads. Aonach Mor at Fort William is to be opened up as a ski area to add to the other four already in current use (Aviemore, Glencoe, Glenshee and the Lecht). In addition there is talk about further expansion at Aviemore and Drumochter Pass. These proposed expansion plans have created a certain amount of controversy in the Scottish press between those who want to see the demand met, those who want to make money out of it, and those people who want to conserve the mountains as they are.

Apart from the logistics of placing the appropriate machinery and accommodation to fulfil the demand, there are two major problems to overcome. One of them is snow. It is unpredictable stuff at the best of times. This is the third new year in a row when the Scottish hills have been bare. Financially this is obviously disastrous, given that it is the major winter holiday period for most people.

The second problem is actually getting to the slopes. Large falls of snow on the hills are clearly to be welcomed. But when it also falls in large dollops on the roads, it is frustrating in the extreme not to be able to actually get to the hills. On the continent, this problem is largely overcome by sophisticated snow-clearing equipment, snow barriers and, in places, covers over the roads to prevent them being blocked.

Skiing has a significant impact on Scotland's economy in terms of employment of those directly involved in servicing the sport, and in the manufacturing and retailing of equipment and clothing. Approximately 3,000 people are employed in Aviemore in the tourist industry, although not all in skiing. This is admittedly the largest and best-developed resort in Scotland, but other towns like Blairgowrie near Glenshee undoubtedly benefit from the boom. The impact of ski clothing can be easily seen any day in Glasgow where ski jackets are common everyday wear for many youngsters.

A classic example of the retail growth is 'Highland Guides', situated near Aviemore. Their major concern is selling cross-country equipment and providing lessons. For years they have operated from what is basically a large wooden hut. Last season they released ambitious plans for a much larger custom-designed building on the same site. If one considers this sort of enterprise across Scotland, then there is a quite clear potential for employment and a subsequent general increase in the tourist trade. This will doubtless be resisted by the conservationist lobby, who complain, with a great deal of justification, about the exploitation of the hills and the permanent damage that is being done to them. I feel, nevertheless, that they will do little more than limit the extent to which expansion is continued.

One area of concern is what to do with all the skiers when they are not actually on the piste. Apart from Aviemore the other ski centres are situated in very remote places. Of course part of their attraction is that very remoteness and the idea of lots of Aviemore replicas spreading throughout the Highlands is utterly appalling. Local hotels attempt to cope with the large numbers of people but there is no doubt that the much-vaunted *après ski* exists in Scotland more as a myth than a reality. There is an idea that flaxen-haired people, beautifully dressed, sip Martinis, socialise and generally relax after a hard day on the slopes. It is more likely to be a very crowded hotel bar, swallowing a pint of 'heavy' (Scottish beer) if one can get close enough to the bar to make yourself heard. Despite lack of snow, Glencoe was packed this season. In one hotel they were renting single beds to couples to cope with the numbers. Imagine what it would have been like if there had been skiing too.

Outdoor pursuit

It is said of one of my friends that if a snowflake falls in the northern hemisphere, he has his skis out ready. He will certainly have to wait a while longer this year. Meanwhile, in this beautiful part of the country, I'll just have another whisky, dig out the maps and contemplate what tomorrow will bring. Perhaps it is just as well that I never could stand Martini. ●

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LETTERS

Patriarchal Workerism

Marxism Today's 'new times' initiative is to be warmly welcomed but does it not require some attention to editorial consistency, especially where this relates to the all-important task of concrete policy formulation? This question was starkly illustrated in the feature article 'Old Age Creeps Up' (*MT* January) by Paul Johnson. If this was indicative of attempts to formulate an agenda for 'new times' then sadly it did it in the guise of a recapitulation of 'present times'.

If one had to sum up this article in two words then they would be 'patriarchal workerism'. The 'problem' of the burden of an increasing population of old people was defined in terms of 'our failure to produce enough children'. The solutions on offer were 'attempting to raise the domestic fertility rate', where it would be the 20 to 30-year olds who would be at the forefront of any such policy. The other major options considered were raising retirement age and/or altering benefit distribution through transfer welfare payments.

While the article emphasised that the reasons for the reduction in fertility are not fully understood, to identify fertility rate as the problem so uncritically ignores more issues than it potentially solves. It is inconceivable to discuss this issue without some consideration of the increased ability of women to control their own fertility and exercise choice. Imperfect as these choices are, they remain tremendously important factors now and for the future and some acknowledgment of the mass of material inspired by feminist analysis was desperately needed here. Awareness of this literature would, perhaps, have resulted in more caution in discussing a 1980s' version of Beveridge's plea for women 'to stay at home and breed the new imperial race'.

The article was also heavily endowed with the 'inevitability' of this and the 'almost certainty' of that. The use of such imperatives reflected an analysis restricted to a consideration of welfare and employment policy.

This reflected another weakness, namely the absence of any understanding of the state as an entity which extends far beyond these realms. The reality is that over the period discussed in this article the British state will be subject to a wide range of political and social pressures of which the demands of an increasingly aged population will be only one. ●

Ian Welsh, Hull

Dilemmas For Soviet Society

What a revealing afterthought by Soviet economist Aganbegyan (*MT* December): '...I forgot to mention that these reforms must be carried through democratically... decisions taken only as a result of discussion.' For the Soviet leadership still sets the goal of catching up with the West in terms of productivity and national income. 'Of course every family must have a car', declares Aganbegyan, though the Soviet people have never discussed the consequences and alternatives.

Already Moscow's traffic is badly congested. Parking places near apartment blocks are unavailable, at far fewer than one per household. Air pollution on the streets often exceeds the legal limit. Changing to a car-based society with urban motorways and vast parking lots is not only hugely costly and demanding on resources and environment, it also disadvantages non-drivers, the young, the infirm, the visually-handicapped, the nervous and the safety-conscious. Will Soviet society face the obvious dilemmas?

In order to catch up economically, their nuclear power programme is vital. Since Chernobyl many people are challenging it. Yet the leadership won't open up the issue to debate. Leading expert Academician Legasov committed suicide this year, after his questioning of the whole nuclear programme was not taken seriously (*Pravda*, Oct 19).

Socialist societies should be capable, more than capitalist ones, of taking decisions on social and global goals, rather than leaving it to economists and market forces. But no mechanism seems yet to have been incorporated in thinking about *perestroika*. ●

Max Wallis, Wales

Youth Power Shortage

Paul Johnson (*MT* January) is mistaken in identifying the main problems of an ageing community as fiscal and economic. They are problems created by a shortage of young 'person-power'. This is especially so in the field of 'people-care'. In the public sphere this is reflected in difficulty in recruiting 18-year olds to nursing. In the private domestic sphere there are now fewer people to care for elderly relatives at home.

The increasingly high proportion of old people in the community, together with the correspondingly dwindling numbers of young people, merely highlights a situation that has existed for years and continues. This is the presence of unpaid workers in the home, mostly women who constitute an essential part of a capitalist economy but who are, as a rule, 'invisible'.

The narrow economistic emphasis in Johnson's article on productive workers and their fiscal contribution to the state serves to obscure the large contribution in services made by this vast army of unpaid carers. Lest it be imagined by readers that it is only, or mainly, the productive workers (a problematic term in itself) who contribute through their national insurance to the other older half of the population, it should be borne in mind that most of the funding for benefits and health-care come from direct taxation.

At present all people with an income contribute through taxation. If the income threshold were raised and those with very high incomes were taxed more than at present, there would be little problem fiscally. It is time that the mis-named National Insurance Scheme was abolished and contributory benefits replaced by benefit contributions derived only from direct taxation. The present scheme is not an insurance scheme, since old age is not an accident but a process everyone can expect to go through if they are lucky.

Thus the burden as such is not inevitably fiscal, but related to the necessity of care provision for dependent elderly, in a physical sense. Perhaps the problem could be resolved in the meantime by encouraging young people to enter 'caring' professions and to do voluntary care work instead of the Territorial Army or something equally 'macho' and unproductive in human terms. ●

Barbara McLaughlin, London

Postmodern Encounters

May I commend Mr Hebdige for his cool and exciting swim through the anxious tangleweeds of postmodernism (*MT* January). Baudrillard wants to kill women in deserts and kill all integrity in peoples' souls by proving that, since nothing is very certain or sacred anymore, we shouldn't worry about life. The big buzzword to replace reality is 'surfaces'. Well, the kids in Soweto and Sharpeville weren't massacred by surfaces, they were shot by very real bullets: bullets shot by people full of ideology.

The other phrase to explain the mess of 1989 is 'loss of centre'. Postmodernism is a totally Europeanist state of the mind, and intellectual panics about the loss of 'centres' and 'reason' have dominated Europeanist thinking.

To claim that the whole world is feeling the same kind of confusion as the postmodernists is daft. Are the peoples of Zimbabwe and Nicaragua freaking out about a 'loss of centre'? You must be joking, they're in the business of creating centres.

How do we defend ourselves against these ghoulish philosophers who insist that we collapse our souls into a game of 'surfaces'? Strengthening our communities is one source of safety and optimism that Mr Hebdige curiously omitted. The point is to survive these days, and the point about surviving is collectivity. Imagine if black people, faced by the spectre of 400 years of Atlantic slavery, probably the most 'centreless' and irrational act ever, had just given up the hope, their collectivity, their determination to survive slavery? Black people have protected their 'centres' every day since 1520, and there are lessons in that for everyone.

Yes, these are chilling times; yes, the future does seem a cruel and uncertain mess, but none of us has the time to waste pretending that the global criminality of Europeans and their money is a delusion of 'surfaces'. We need our time for bravery. ●

Jez Vanes, Bilston

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LETTERS

Reconstructing Marxist Method

In a carefully-constructed article Dick Hebdige takes apart the concept of 'postmodernism' (*MT* January).

The 'debate' about postmodernism is taken, in an anglo-saxon context, to be an affair of a French intellectual revolution on a par with, say 'structuralism' and 'poststructuralism'. This is far from being the case. The tiny numbers of academics involved in this 'movement' (if one can call it this, given the huge differences between people like Lyotard and Baudrillard) can perhaps be seen in the almost universal indifference to the 'post-modernist' exhibition held at Beaubourg in 1986.

Secondly, there is almost nothing intellectually substantial in their concepts. Baudrillard's misunderstanding of Marx's basic concepts is notorious in France.

Finally, anyone who can take Lyotard seriously has my pity. In his latest incarnation he believes that Kuhn and Feyerabend represent the most 'post-modern' theories in the sphere of epistemology! These begin from a totally arbitrary world-view. Their ontologies, like Baudrillard's peculiar 'end of history', are frankly, rubbish. By contrast, serious attempts to reconstruct marxist methodology, by such figures as GA Cohen, Roy Bhaskar, and even your own Gregor McLennan, are ignored.

The European Left is going through some drastic changes at the moment. This can be gleaned from the Communist Party dissidents' movement in France, led by Pierre Juquin, choosing to have contacts with the British Socialist Society rather than your part of the 'Euro-Left'. Given *Marxism Today*'s continuing move to the right one wonders who your allies might be. Perhaps Michel Rocard?●

Andrew Coates, Ipswich

Inheriting The Earth

I don't suppose Geoff Mulgan chose his own heading 'The Power Of The Weak' (*MT* December), which suggests '... for they shall inherit the Earth'. He describes how they might better organise to do so, but first, he precedes from an unexpected consequence of contemporary automation.

As a technical journalist I would certainly like to confirm that automation, in its varied forms, far from pensioning-off all the humans, is pathetically dependent on their ministrations. The more sophisticated the technology becomes, the more intelligent are the responses it needs from its attendants. If its competitive benefits are to be reaped and its proprietors not bankrupted, these attendants must be well trained and committed.

British management who have been told that they must 'automate or liquidate' feel let down by automation, which has not liberated them from industrial relations.

To make matters worse, product quality, now central to international competitiveness, has to inhere in the manufacturing process. No longer can industry afford the time or money for post-production quality control. For both machine and product, the indispensable need is to engage the operator in responsibility for the result. It is not so much that 'strong' control is counter-productive to this end, as that softly-softly is the only strategy for trying to establish the mutual trust by which alone the worker can be induced to identify sufficiently with the vital commercial interests of the boss.

As far as industry is concerned it doesn't seem very illuminating to highlight the means – 'weak' control – rather than the ends. And these are to incorporate more of the brains and will of the worker into his/her labour power. In this respect I am surprised that Geoff Mulgan did not refer to the role of culture, which we have recently discovered does not evaporate on passing through the factory door.

Globalisation of markets has traumatically exposed Britain to cultures of an entirely higher manufacturing and competitive potential. Japan, which has butchered large docile herds of Western industry, is now the mentor of its managerial practice. Japanese culture is devastatingly adapted to international competitiveness. Their prioritising of market share before profit, consensual decision-making and an employment policy that defuses resistance to new technology is just the tip of the iceberg. ●

Harry Challis, Shropshire

Unions' Central Role

Philip Bassett (*MT* January) is right to argue that unions should adapt to the realities of the changed employment situation, but he goes much too far in elevating the role of personal and individual services as against collective bargaining. Behind his conclusion is the assumption that unions will remain weak vis a vis the employers.

It is significant that his article does not mention the spate of anti-union legislation enacted by the Thatcher government, which is the main reason for the present weakness of the unions. Recognising this gives grounds for a quite different strategy from that advocated by Bassett, at the heart of which is the campaign for the election of a Labour government.

Wasn't the reason for the creation of the Labour Party at the beginning of the century to get a fairer industrial relations environment for unions and workers? Today that needs to be given an equally high priority.

All this is not to minimise Bassett's very powerful case for unions to be more responsive to their members' individual needs. Anyone looking towards a more democratic society in the future will envisage unions playing a substantial role in the provision of facilities such as holidays, leisure and culture. Surely we will not set lower aims for them.

But that will be in addition to, and not as an alternative to, their central role in looking after wages and conditions at the workplace. ●

Jock Nicolson, London

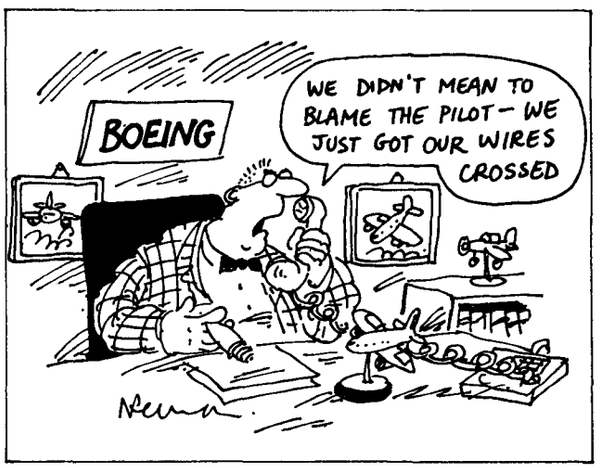
Disorganised Capitalism

The enclosed poem is inspired by John Urry's article (*MT* October) on the theme of 'Disorganised Capitalism' and echoes a famous poem by Hugh MacDiarmid.

Fragmenting the word
processor,
forty-two micro chips flew back
centrifugally to
productive units,
stain-glassed,
stainless-steeled,
state-sponsored,
state of the art,
air tight and air conditioned
in arid Texas
and fast food California,
in Denmark and
technical Germany,
in Japan, frantic Taiwan
and Singapore,
even cow dung,
green field west Cork:
a telecommunicated
dissembling journey
over one million miles
from the static
point of the final plastic clip
but perfect like the
transparent bubble
behind the bleached
gull's skull
that fixed the tilt of the wings,
without apparent effort
or studied plan. ●

Francis Devine, Dublin

Editorial Note: We welcome your letters to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters Page, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut. ●



NICK NEWMAN

PS

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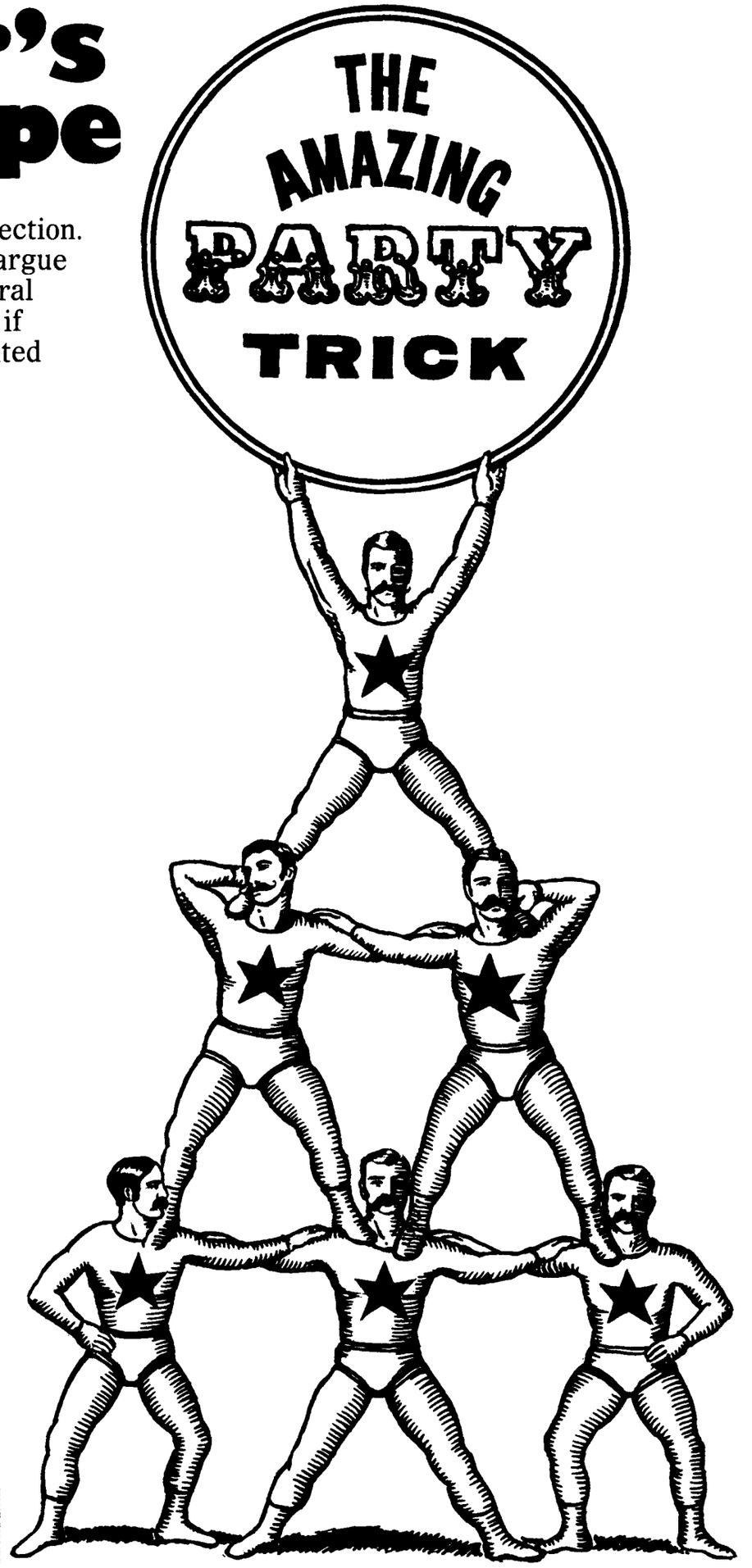
Labour's One Hope

Labour cannot win the next election. **Tricia Davis** and **David Green** argue that the case for an electoral agreement is irresistible if Thatcherism is to be defeated



Barbara Lofus

No serious political observer believes that Labour will win the next general election. From its current base in parliament, Labour needs a swing of 8% to win an overall majority of one seat. This is greater than the swing to Labour in 1945 in very different circumstances. Over the last 18 months Labour's poll position has been worse than during the comparable period after Thatcher's sweeping 1983 victory. And forthcoming boundary changes may well cost Labour an estimated 20 seats.

The main response from the Labour Party has been to soldier on in the hope that something will turn up. As Roy Hattersley has put it: 'There is nothing to do other than what we have done in the past, only better.'

The fact is that Labour cannot win the next general election on its own, while another Thatcher victory followed by a fourth term would create an even more difficult climate in which to defeat the Tories subsequently. It would make more likely the development of the Conservative Party into the single dominant party, a British version of the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party, exercising more or less continuous governmental power.

In some ways Thatcher's electoral success is puzzling. Many of the government's policies are unpopular, in some cases increasingly so. Support for more spending on the NHS, for example, has risen from 63% in 1983 to 83% in 1988. Moreover, the government doesn't , and never has, commanded the support of the majority of voters, let alone electors.

Thatcher's success depends on three factors. Firstly, Thatcherism possesses and offers a sense of purpose and direction which finds support even from those who strongly disagree with her on specific issues. Secondly, the centre-left opposition is divided in the electoral contest with the Tories.

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Thirdly, there is as yet no coherent, modernising and popular alternative to the enterprise culture which can challenge Thatcherism successfully.

The overcoming of electoral division and the development of an alternative to Thatcherism are distinct but related projects. Here we want to concentrate on the possibilities of overcoming the electoral division.

During the course of Thatcher's third term, there has been a marked shift of opinion in the Labour Party on issues of electoral and constitutional reform. The most dramatic change concerns proportional representation. This has emerged from a growing sense that Labour is unlikely to win an election in the forseeable future under the present electoral system, coupled with a somewhat belated recognition of the democratic issues involved. Robin Cook, John Cunningham and Jeff Rooker have all announced their conversion to some form of PR. Of course, the problem with PR is that until the Conservatives are defeated, there is absolutely no chance of it ever being introduced.

The growth of support in the Labour Party for some kind of electoral agreement has been rather more limited but nonetheless real. Labour MP John Evans recently suggested, for example, that Labour and Democrats should stand down in an equal number of seats, 30 each, and has offered Bath and Hereford as examples where Labour might stand down, and Basildon and Battersea for the Democrats. John Reid, Labour MP for Motherwell, has made a similar proposal.

Perhaps the main objection from Labour's point of view is the fear that by entering into an electoral arrangement it would sacrifice any chance of winning a majority government on its own. This is certainly the case. But it is the case with or without an electoral agreement. Labour's failure to win an electoral victory since 1974 isn't a short-term aberration. Events in 1988 have brought this into sharp relief. The government's economic miracle began to look distinctly ragged. A growing number of Labour's front bench performed better than their Conservative opponents. The centre parties were pre-occupied with internal questions. The simmering crisis in the NHS around funding and then nurses' pay highlighted the areas in which Labour has the better record. Yet the year ended with the Conservatives 10 points ahead of Labour in the opinion polls.

A further objection is that, in Labour MP Chris Smith's words, electoral pacts 'ignore the wishes, interests and dedication of party members up and down the country who struggle for years against enormous odds to maintain a Labour profile, to get councillors elected and to put issues across'. That any electoral agreement, whether limited or comprehensive, would mean large sections of southern England in particular without Labour parliamentary candidates at the next general election has to be set against the real frustration of Labour activists and supporters when efforts and votes fail to deliver political power.

'There is good reason to believe that the Democrats might be persuaded'

If such an agreement proved electorally successful, moreover, it would be a temporary arrangement, leading hopefully to a situation where future elections were held on the basis of PR, thereby giving a quite new meaning to Labour contests in those parts of the south where, under the present system, Labour is on a hiding to nothing.

The other side of the electoral equation mainly concerns the attitude of the SLD, at least in England. At the moment there is little sign of support within its ranks for some kind of electoral arrangement with the Labour Party. Immediate past history is an important factor here. The experience of the Alliance turned sour and has left a bitter taste. The SLD is presently involved in a difficult struggle to establish its own identity against on the one hand the SDP and on the other hand its own past. Talk of new electoral agreements is bound to be seen at the moment as muddying the waters.

Nonetheless, there is good reason to believe that the Democrts might be persuaded. Since the rupture with Dr Owen, the SLD belongs far more unambiguously in the anti-Thatcherite camp. Unlike Labour, which throughout the postwar period has been one of the two beneficiaries of the two-party system, the Democrats belong to a disadvantaged tradition. Thus while Labour has always seen itself in autarchic terms, the Democrat tradition has not, while its commitment to PR has been longstanding for obvious reasons. Paddy Ashdown may now speak of going it alone and replacing the Labour Party as the main party of the Left, but this is mainly rhetoric.

The SDP poses a rather different problem. Ironically, at their conference last September, Owen called for an electoral arrangement with the SLD and floated the idea of a wider deal including Labour against Mrs Thatcher. Given the political history of Owen and the SDP this is very difficult to see. Arguably, he has more in common with the Thatcherite than the anti-Thatcherite forces, which is not to ignore the fact that there are other tendencies in the SDP.

In Scotland and Wales, of course, the nationalist parties will be an important consideration in any electoral arrangement. In Scotland debate along these lines is rather more advanced than it is in England. The reason is fairly obvious, namely the need for the 'opposition' parties to make common cause on behalf of Scotland against a Thatcherite force which is seen as profoundly English. Already there is talk of some kind of deal in the remaining Tory-held seats in order to eliminate the Tory parliamentary presence in Scotland.

Finally, and most fundamentally, would an electoral agreement work where it actually matters, on the ground? Is it not the case that while most Labour voters may well transfer their vote to the Democrat candidate, the Democrat voter is rather less likely to reciprocate and could well vote Conservative? The evidence from the experience of tactical voting at the last election is ambiguous, while the sharp decline in support for the centre parties since then has gone to the Right as much as the Left.

The critical question here is the political character of any agreement. The easiest arrangement to arrive at would be one which concentrated on seats rather than policies. It is also the one that is least likely to convince voters and most likely to be blown apart by the Tories.

For an electoral agreement to realise the arithmetical sum of its parts, or better indeed, requires a more comprehensive political agreement. This would be much more difficult to achieve but is by no means impossible. For there is much in common between Labour and the Democrats on many questions.

There remains a real danger, however, that such an agreement would have the feel of the past about it. Electoral division is not the only reason for Thatcherism's success. Increasingly important has been Thatcherism's ability to capture and adapt to new social developments. For any electoral agreement to stand a chance of success, it would need to convince that it was looking forwards rather than backwards, that it had something serious to say about the post-Thatcherite agenda.

Any successful challenge to Thatcherism must be based on a political strategy which tackles the problems and meets the aspirations of the majority. Progressive, environmentally sustainable modernisation, combining recognition and encouragement of democracy and diversity, are critical themes to be adopted by any future government.

One of the interesting features of political debate on the Centre and the Left over the last year or so is that, as it has slowly come to address the new realities, so the discussion has become increasingly broad-minded and ecumenical.

People are increasingly prepared to listen to each other, and feel there is something to be gained from such a wider dialogue, and that party frontiers are simply too restrictive for creative political and intellectual debate. The extent of this emergent centre-left dialogue can be gleaned from a reading of the Labour Party policy review documents, the SLD's new *Our Different Vision* and the Communist Party's *Facing Up To The Future*. The development of this dialogue is critical both to the possibility of an agreement and its forward-looking character. ●

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Pacts: Link Or Sink?

The 'pacts' debate arouses strong reactions. We tested the current mood by asking some familiar figures if they thought there was a case for some kind of electoral agreement between the opposition parties to defeat Mrs T at the next election. Here's what they said

In 1979 it was, above all, Mrs Thatcher's sharp certainty that she knew what Britain needed, coupled with her evangelical flair, that won over the voters. An incipid lowest-common-denominator electoral pact would carry no such conviction. I've never been on a demo where the chorus 'Thatcher Out!' excited the citizens on the pavement.

What the Labour Party has to do is put together a programme that will convince and excite the voters. It is a dangerous illusion that the pain involved in doing that can be avoided by cobbling together an electoral pact.

Nor in practice would such a pact consolidate the opposition vote. Where Labour stood down the SLD/SDP (would *they* agree?) might well pick up most of the Labour vote. But where a Labour candidate stood, most of the SLD/SDP supporters would go back to the Conservatives – or stay at home. ●

Lord Len Murray (General Secretary of the TUC, 1973-84)

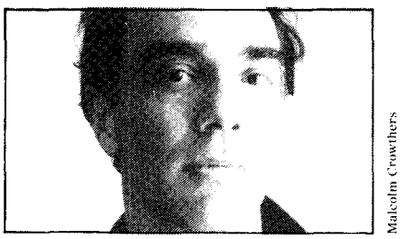
No: I don't think there's a case for any kind of agreement. There are campaigns on which we can all work together, such as Charter 88 to get a bill of rights, but it is by no means clear to me that there is a sufficient common agenda shared between the opposition parties to make for an agreement yet. After the next election there may be a case for it, but that will require some real generosity on all sides. It isn't enough to be jointly against someone, and in any case there are some things I'd support her on! There have to be common goals and a shared vision as well. ●

Julia Neuberger (Rabbi)

My own politics are 'angora jumper' – that is, pink and woolly. After a very radical youth, I'm afraid I discovered my other hand in my 30s. There's no such thing as pure politics: it must be deeply practical. It's a nice idea that David Owen and Neil Kinnock might cuddle up together in an agreement, but I can't see it. So the electorate should realise that it's perfectly reasonable to vote *against* a party you don't like, rather than, for instance, not voting at all because no party precisely suits your preferences. At the last election I was a great advocate of tactical voting.

It doesn't bother me so much who's in government, as long as they have the smallest possible majority: to make them work hard and to keep the opposition parties working hard too, rather than ending up hopeless and demoralised. It is bloody ridiculous to have the present massive majority for a government with a minority of votes. That makes me angry. ●

Claire Rayner (Journalist, broadcaster and novelist)



Malcolm Crowthers

The basic problem of British politics and society is that we hide division, rather than reveal it. To try and build artificial bridges is no answer, just short-term expediency. In the long term I would hope our political system could become much more diverse and locally-devolved, which would open up real possibilities for alliances. But that would need the present elective dictatorship to fall apart altogether first. ●

Derek Jarman (Film-maker)

Unless the opposition parties can frame a clearly-defined manifesto, an election pact would be self-defeating. The Conservative Party would immediately ask which policies the combined opposition had agreed to support, and which to jettison. The electoral damage from the resulting turmoil would probably deliver a considerable majority to the Conservatives. GMB activists have repeatedly said that the Labour Party lost the last election because party policy was not focused sharply enough. An electoral pact which could only be held together by greater fuzziness would be a recipe for another major defeat. ●

John Edmonds (General Secretary of the GMB Britain's General Union)

Unless the opposition parties agree to some form of electoral agreement, the Tories are almost certainly heading for a fourth term in 1991/2. That is common ground among political commentators today. All that is missing is the will among the leadership of most opposition parties to even discuss an electoral arrangement. It is almost as if to whisper the thought is an attack on the leadership's virility. In other words 'pure opposition' counts for more than shared power.

In the short term, Plaid Cymru has nothing to gain from any such arrangement. The likelihood is that we can hold on to our Westminster seats without any help, and in practice a smaller party always has more to lose. But the bottom line for us is the Tories' antipathy to any constitutional change. Only an anti-Tory government would introduce such change, backed up by a sizeable Plaid Cymru/SNP presence in Westminster.

Radical constitutional change is a

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prerequisite to any arrangement we might consider. That would also benefit the regions of England. Neither the Labour Party, nor the SLD are in any mood to talk, but I have no doubt that a fourth successive defeat will force them to think again. ●
Ieuan Wyn Jones (MP for Ynys Môn)

In the last two decades, Liberals – and later Social Democrats – have spent too much time debating electoral pacts while other parties have spent too little. Happily the subject is no longer taboo in cross-party discussions.

The reason electoral pacts must be discussed now is because of the dire political consequences of the simply enormous and undemocratic distortion brought about by our electoral system. Mrs Thatcher and her party have never won the support of more than a third of the British electorate. It is, therefore, ludicrous that she has had 10 years of power and that people can allow her unjustified control to continue. If our electoral system is flawed, it is no good waiting for it to come to our rescue. All democrats must now try to get round it until we have an electoral system that is democratic and fair. ●
Simon Hughes (Liberal Democrat MP for Southwark and Bermondsey)

There is a powerful case for securing an electoral agreement – but of what kind? Democrats and SDP should be natural allies. The SDP has made it clear that it is willing to negotiate. We hope that our former colleagues will eventually see the sense of this.

As far as Labour is concerned, they would have to revise their views on defence and the economy. If they then decided to back proportional representation we could put together a minimum programme of constitutional reform. We would end the poll tax, restore confidence in local government, introduce devolution for Scotland and Wales, bring in a bill of rights and pass a freedom of information act. Labour will not win the next election on their own. They should change their policy on electoral reform now and not wait for a fourth defeat to drive them to it. ●
John Cartwright (President of the SDP, and MP for Woolwich)

The view of Labour's National Executive Committee is clear. In December there was a virtually unanimous vote to oppose pacts. The resolution was moved by Tony Benn, vehemently supported by Roy Hattersley and almost everyone in between.

For myself, I would be willing to consider pacts if we cannot stop Thatcher in any other way and if they would work. It is too early to conclude that Labour's position will not improve. Talk of pacts weakens our ability to pull out of the current demoralised mood. It is far from clear that people would be willing to vote according to instructions from on high. The campaign for tactical voting made no impression in the last election. Those who advocate pacts must test the views of the people. If they are unwilling to vote tactically in significant numbers then the whole thing is a non-starter. ●
Clare Short (MP Birmingham Ladywood)

A better case can be made for opposition parties campaigning *now*, in favour of proportional representation. The present government won't introduce PR this parliament, but the effect of such a campaign is likely to be a better-informed electorate, which might then be more receptive to the idea of voting for a second-preference party in seats where an electoral pact had been agreed for the next general election. It's also unrealistic to imagine that the Democrats, SNP and Plaid Cymru would allow Labour a free run in some seats at an election, without prior agreement that they could either join the government or extract some key policy points from a Labour government. ●
Margo MacDonald (Journalist)

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Shaking Up The World

A Roundtable Discussion

Gorbachev's extraordinary speech at the United Nations in December was breathtaking in its boldness and originality. It ushers in a new era in international relations. But what will that era look like? Our panel of eminent specialists peers into the future

The participants in the roundtable are: Denis Healey, Labour MP and former shadow foreign secretary; Giorgio Napolitano, head of foreign affairs and member of the central committee of the Italian Communist Party; Victor Orlik, journalist and editor of *Soviet Weekly*; and Charles Wheeler, a foreign correspondent who covers the United States and Eastern Europe for BBC *Newsnight*. The discussion was chaired by Jon Snow, diplomatic editor of ITN, who has recently spent much time in Washington and Moscow.

The speech that Gorbachev made at the United Nations in December seems in itself a considerable advance from the vision that we saw him articulating in 1985. Victor, I wonder if we could start with you? Do you feel that Gorbachev's vision is evolving?

Victor Everyone, both in the Soviet Union, and I hope beyond the borders of the Soviet Union, expects Gorbachev to go further, both in his domestic reforms and in the ideas and initiatives which he puts forward in the field of foreign policy. In his speech at the UN, he made clear that the essence of the new political thinking is the priority of human values in comparison with so-called class values. There has been a tendency by some Soviet and foreign writers to interpret the former as mainly about the survival of the human race.

That is too simplistic, there's nothing particularly new in that, Khruschev was doing the same and Brezhnev spoke along similar lines. The strength of Gorbachev's position is that he is applying new political thinking to the domestic scene, that he presents Soviet foreign policy in its inseparable unity with home affairs, hence democratisation, openness and tolerance at home are now part and parcel of Soviet foreign policy.

Given, Charles, that the headline of the day following that speech was that concerning troop and tank reduction, do you think that Gorbachev's message was understood here?

Charles No, it wasn't and I should plead guilty here. I covered that speech for *Newsnight*. We had to make a choice, to concentrate on the second half of the speech, or the first half, and although I found the first half absolutely fascinating, I could see no way with a deadline of four hours of tackling it. And even reading it now, I don't know how I would report it, because I don't really know what he means in terms of policy, and what troubles me is that there has been very little discussion of the first part of the speech since. I think it went virtually unreported.

Giorgio, do you think there is any sense in Europe that the ideas have been picked up, or do you think that they've merely gone with the hardware, the decisions over arms and reductions?

Giorgio I think that in Western Europe there was a good deal of attention to the substance of the first part of the speech.

. . . the philosophical part of the speech?

Giorgio Yes, although perhaps nobody could praise that speech better than the *New York Times* did. I quote what they wrote the following day: 'Not since Woodrow Wilson presented his 14 points or since Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill promulgated the Atlantic Charter has a world figure demonstrated the vision Mikhail Gorbachev displayed on Wednesday at the United Nations. Breathtaking, risky, bold, naive, diversionary, and heroic all fit.' I think they understood. Up to a point, the more open-minded West European politicians understood it was a new vision. I think the main features of this vision had already been put forward in Gorbachev's book and also on some other occasions, for instance in his report to the 19th party conference. In the party conference he emphasised the priority of universal values over class values in international relations.

I don't share fully what Victor said. Indeed Gorbachev insists not only on survival but also on the necessity of cooperation for progress, and on the necessity of elaborating a new concept of progress. But also survival in this context is not the same thing as Khruschev meant. First, because at that time not all the consequences were drawn from the recognition of the deepness and gravity of the nuclear danger. The fact that nobody could win was never stated so fully and clearly before Gorbachev, neither by the Soviet Union nor by the United States.

Second, Gorbachev insists on the existence of a more and more interdependent and integrated world and the concept of interdependence was absolutely alien to Brezhnev and also to Khruschev. It is a concept imported from Western political literature, but which was alien to the old leaders of the Soviet Union. A world in which there are growing common risks, nuclear and ecological, and where there is a new consciousness of those risks. There is also a new substance as regards to these risks which couldn't be seen 20 years ago. Then there is the explosive situation of the Third World. These are the three main common risks. Then there are the great new opportunities, provided by the technological revolution, which cannot be realised without a joint effort. So a joint effort to face common risks and to seize new opportunities. This is Gorbachev's radically new philosophy.

Victor You can't imagine Brezhnev adopting this position now?

Giorgio No, because the things Gorbachev is saying now could have been said at least 10 years ago. It was

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already clear at that time that the two superpowers would lose control of many situations. The world needed to move towards multi-polar rather than bi-polar management. But after bi-polar management began to break down, instead of interdependence, which was already possible and necessary, there was confrontation between the two superpowers from the late 70s. Moreover, Brezhnev talked of class values and by that he meant the so-called defence of socialist Czechoslovakia and the struggle for influence in the Third World.

Denis Gorbachev really laid out his fundamental position in his speech to the Communist Party congress though at the time it was far too little noticed in the West. He then buried the concept that world history was a struggle between two camps, which in the end one or the other would win, hopefully the socialist camp, hopefully but not necessarily without war. Now he threw that away and said we must move, groping in the dark as it were – a most uncharacteristic phrase for any statesman to use, because statesmen like everyone to think they know exactly where they are going and that there is no darkness in their mind – towards an interdependent and even integral world. At the time he made that speech he was dominated by the recognition, not only that you can't win a nuclear war, but that even a large scale conventional war could produce similar damage, the Chernobyl type of thing . . .

Giorgio He said it openly.

Denis...he said that and I think it was this element that dominated him. But to me, the staggering new thing in his UN speech, and I agree with Charles, it was almost unnoticed here, though not in the US, was that he really overthrew the principles of marxism-leninism as the basis for understanding the world. What is extraordinary to me is that he should have said there were two great revolutions, the French revolution in 1789, the Russian revolution in 1917, and both gave a tremendous impetus, shaped a whole way of thinking. He said they were a most precious spiritual heritage, but not that the Russian revolution had established the way forward for humanity in the future, as all other Soviet leaders have said. He said on the contrary, and I quote his words: 'We are not abandoning our convictions, our philosophy or traditions, nor do we urge anyone to abandon their's, but neither do we have any intention to be hemmed in by our values. That would mean intellectual impoverishment, would mean rejecting a powerful source of development, the exchange of everything original that each nation has independently created.' So the idea of a bitter conflict between a Soviet way of looking at things and a capitalist way is abandoned.

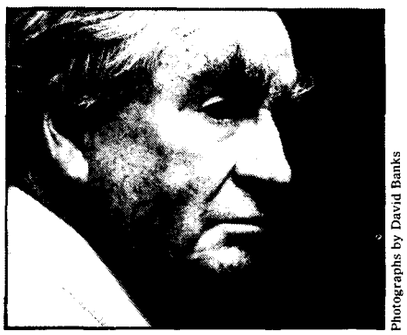
Even before that, the class struggle had gone. I remember having a long argument with Trofimenko, Abartov's deputy, in Sweden, I think in the first year Gorbachev was in power. Trofimenko urged us to take very seriously the desire for co-operation on security with the West, but insisted that the Soviet government had a socialist responsibility to assist revolution in the Third World, and he wouldn't be budged from that. But since then, Soviet spokesmen have explicitly abandoned that duty; we've seen them seeking to extricate themselves from excessive involvement in Angola, of course in Afghanistan, in Kampuchea and we may see it happening in Central America too. I think that what essentially he's done is to accept pluralism, to emphasise the importance of unity in diversity, which is very much not a traditional Soviet concept.

Giorgio There is a curious thing here. When there was a crisis in the international communist movement between the Chinese and the Soviet party in the early 60s, Togliatti proposed, for the communist movement, exactly the same formula, unity in diversity.

Denis The concept was around in Khruschev's time. Khruschev did in fact allow Gomulka to pursue his own way to socialism, and even before that, Stalin, in words, had allowed the Yugoslavs to pursue their own way to socialism, although there is evidence he contemplated the possibility of overthrowing Tito. In his UN speech, much more clearly than ever before, Gorbachev has emphasised the importance of giving people freedom of choice. How far that will go I don't know, and I think thoughtful people now are very concerned that the cold war gave a degree of stability over large areas of the world because the magnetic force, if you like, of the superpowers overrode tensions inside each bloc. As that magnetic force declines, we're finding the revival of local, national and communal hostilities.

In Eastern Europe now, it's not the Yalta settlement only that's at stake, it's also the Versailles treaty after the first world war; some of the states like Yugoslavia which were set up after the first world war, now threaten to break up into component parts. It could happen in Czechoslovakia. The tension over Transylvania between Hungary and Rumania is another example, and of course there is the problem which the Russians face in their own empire, which is the only 19th-century empire to have survived into the second half of the 20th century. The Western world is still obsessed by the image of the Soviet Union created under Stalin and his successors; it has not really come to grips with the effect on stability of the loosening of the units which were created by superpower hegemony. But here again I think Gorbachev has shown immense vision in suggesting that this is where the UN may have a very important role because it's not possible for the superpowers on their own to run the world together, any more than they can separately.

Can we then move from the vision to looking at the individual, practical building blocks that are going to have to be constructed to reach any concept of the sort of interdependent world that Gorbachev is looking at? We've tended in the West to concentrate very heavily on the military negotiations, but he talked in the UN about industrial progress which would be of benefit to all humankind, he talked about economic interdependence and how



Photographs by David Banks

new economic alliances are going to have to be developed. There is now much talk about 1992 and the future of the European Community, but little consideration has been given to the idea of a deal with Comecon, or the possibility that Hungary might be a member. Are we now looking at the possibility of a new series of economically interdependent blocs?

Denis: 'The whole international landscape is undergoing enormous changes and with the slow disintegration of the bloc mentality, we are going to have a much more fluid situation'

Denis For a long time after the end of the last war, people who looked towards an integrated world society thought it would come about through cooperation between great blocs – North America, South America, Western Europe, the Soviet bloc, the African bloc and the Latin American bloc – but I have personally always felt that if you divide the world up into a lot of multinational units, you don't make peace or prosperity more likely, you make it less likely. An untidy proliferation of overlapping organisations is a much healthier approach to stability in the future than that old one. All this I think is going to come acutely to a head when the European governments approach 1992 because already by bringing in the Mediterranean countries, the European Community has made the Monnet dream impossible. Now the southern members of the Community are quite interested in extending it to some countries in northern Africa – Morocco for example, is discussed as a possible member. There's of course Turkey pressing to get in, and then you've got the neutral EFTA countries – Austria, Sweden, even Finland – and East Germany is already a country member of the Community club because the Germans managed to get the removal of all customs barriers between the two Germanies...

Charles What's the way ahead in that case, perhaps to look East?

Denis Well, I believe myself that this will happen. I think the six, the original core of the Community, will have to accept that if they move in that

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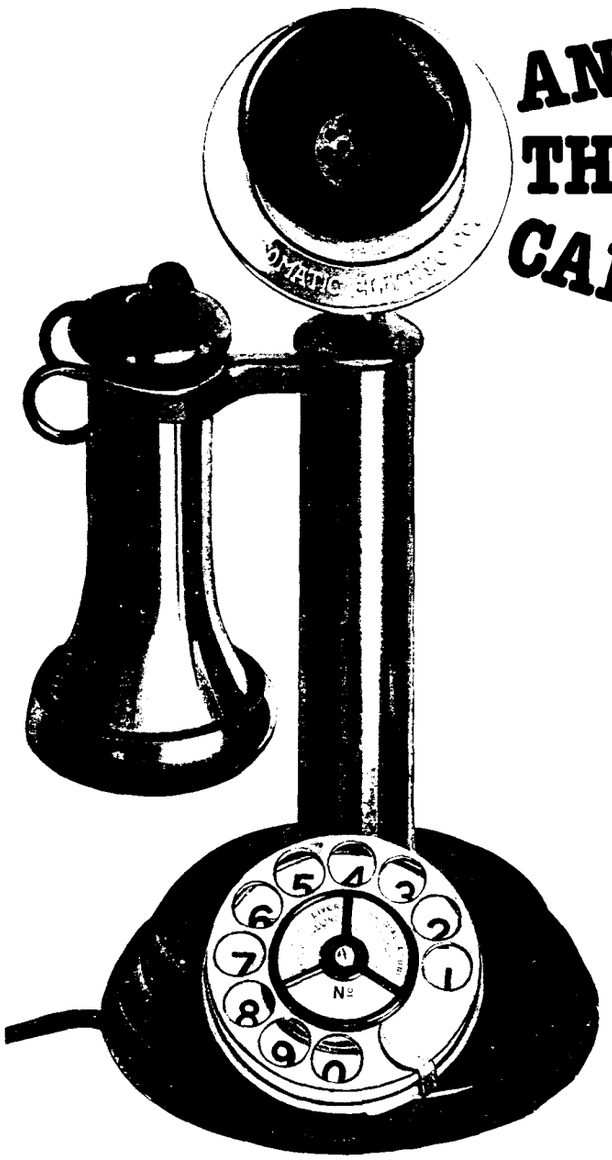

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direction, then the sort of tight supranational Community which Monnet hoped for is really out of the question. Personally, I think that will be a good thing. To that extent, my thinking overlaps a tiny little bit with, I'm ashamed to say, that of Attila the Hen!

Giorgio The first thing is that Gorbachev recognises the importance of the regional integration process in Western Europe. I was in Moscow at the end of March with the general secretary of my party and we had a six-hour discussion with Gorbachev. A large part of the discussion was devoted to this very point, the successful story of the European Community. Gorbachev was tremendously interested in understanding the secret of its success. At the same time, although he recognises the importance of such regional integration processes, he said in his speech at the UN that they are not enough. At a regional level, nobody can give a solution to the problem of overall development on a world scale, which includes of course the developing countries. So the crucial point is for the European Community and other regional organisations – I attach great importance, for example, to an effort towards regional integration in Latin America, and particularly between Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay; and anyhow we shouldn't underrate the regional integration process in Eastern Europe which Gorbachev wants to develop – is that there are open and cooperative relations between these different realities. In particular, the European Community must not become a closed community, a fortress. It must not be a fortress, neither towards the EFTA countries, nor towards the developing countries, nor towards the East.

Denis Nor towards America or Japan, because that's the central issue in the negotiations at the moment.

Giorgio But of course as regards America and Japan I think we must not be naive. We have to discuss very seriously with them the rules, because also America and Japan have to respect certain rules towards Europe. My fundamental preoccupation is relations with the developing countries. I don't think the European Community will have barriers towards Japan and the United States, we will find arrangements with them. My fear is that the European Community is not sufficiently open as regards relations with the South – the North/South problem. I think that the European Community is sufficiently open-minded also as regards relations now with the East and with the EFTA countries, but the point is what to do particularly for the developing countries.

Denis Today there is only one big country which is taking the economic development of the Third World seriously and that's Japan, at least for the last year or two. And I think it is very dangerous to ignore Japan's part in this process. The Japanese have started saying openly that they want to move away from having the dollar as the only reserve currency in the Western world. They want several key currencies, including the yen, and I think this whole range of issues is going to play an increasingly important role. Now for a long time I think the Soviet Union will not be able to exercise much influence in these discussions because it's so much in a position of a *demandeur*. It wants Western technology, it wants access to hard currency and it has very little to offer in return by comparison with the others. By the way, I agree very much with Giorgio on the Third World. A study was done recently in the US showing that the Third World has lost twice as much in terms of exports to the OECD countries as a result of trade barriers, as it gets in aid from them. And the capital flows from many of the Third World countries are into the rich countries instead of the other way round.

Giorgio There is a net financial flow from South to North...

Denis I agree, but again when Gorbachev raises these issues, as he did, people say, 'well look, that's all very well, but you hardly give any aid yourselves, you haven't done much lending. And what lending you've done is largely to countries which share your political views and you've done it for political reasons.' I think that the Soviet leadership, and many of the people who advise it like Aganbegyan, who have a great deal of contact with the Western world, are beginning to realise that if they join the GATT and the IMF, as they now would like to, they'll have to accept the responsibilities as well as enjoy the advantages.

Victor The crucial thing is for the Soviet Union to become a member of the international division of labour. This constitutes the basis for all our deliberations on the subject. There has never been an understanding of this necessity by previous Soviet leaderships. The historic merit of Gorbachev and the people who support him and the new administration, is that at last we have realised that without becoming a member of the international division of labour, we won't be able to produce the commodities needed by the Soviet people, we won't be able to compete in the international arena. Now while accepting some of Denis' points on the Soviet role in the Third World, we have played a rather significant role in the economies of some developing countries. I can cite India, Egypt, not to speak of Syria, Indonesia and many other parts of the world. We were providing help and assistance on the basis of our economic performance, with all its virtues and shortcomings.

Finally, I want to come back to what Giorgio said about Gorbachev and Brezhnev. Let us not forget that the Helsinki agreement in 1975 became possible under Brezhnev, but we have not yet fulfilled certain stipulations of the Helsinki agreement. The Helsinkiisation of Soviet foreign policy is now a priority under Gorbachev. The most important thing about Gorbachev is not these new ideas and initiatives, for they could be carried through by someone else, but *perestroika* and *glasnost* at home. Priority lies back at home. We must do away with the alienation of the masses, which has unfortunately become a reality under socialism.

You are saying that these foreign policy changes are a process which has been going on longer, and is no longer dependent upon Gorbachev.

Victor Sure, to confine all the changes that are taking place in the Soviet Union to Gorbachev is wrong. It goes without saying.

Charles Can I question that thesis for a second? I wonder if you underestimate the qualities of leadership this man possesses, that we haven't seen before, and we are not seeing anywhere else. What you've got in the world at the moment, and have had for the last two or three years, is a single person occupying the very centre of the world stage, to such an extent that the president of the US can only share that spotlight, maybe even only the edge of it, when he goes for a summit meeting with Gorbachev. Consider the implications of that in countries like Germany, in the Third World, in India, in the Middle East. I don't believe that any other Soviet leader who might have had the same idea and recognised the same imperatives in Soviet society, could have had the success he's had. Of course it's limited, and we know it's limited, but who else could have rallied not just Soviet intellectuals, but intellectuals in the outside world in support, and gradually be converting even

Americans to the notion, which is a very difficult thing for them to accept, that this is not necessarily the ultimate enemy who wants to conquer them.

Victor It is not enough to praise Gorbachev, to shower him with compliments, as the Western press is doing. The thing is to reciprocate what he is suggesting.

Charles That is stage two. Stage one is to accept that the guy is being honest, which for example, Thatcher long before Reagan accepted, Denis I think you'll agree. And the second stage is to reciprocate and we are now, still to some extent, at the acceptance stage.

Victor Gorbachev enjoys immense

Giorgio: 'The European Community must not become a closed community. It must not be a fortress, neither towards the EFTA countries, nor the developing countries, nor towards the East'

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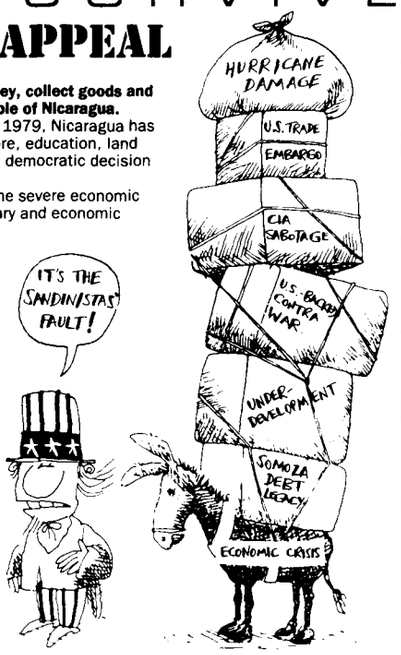

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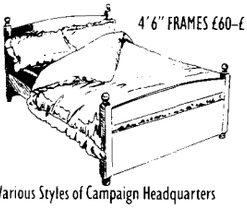

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popularity in the Soviet Union. He is widely respected, but knowing our history, you must understand that we are fed up with the cult of personality. We don't want that kind of thing. Gorbachev is prepared to accept criticism and you will find plenty of critical remarks in the media.

Denis I think the first and vital thing is that Gorbachev has been a tremendous success in his external policy. He's changed Soviet policy towards the outside world, in ways he hasn't yet succeeded in doing inside, because inside the Soviet Union, according to what he and others say, he is faced with cynicism among the people and with the opposition of an enormous state and party bureaucracy which is terrified of losing its privileges. Now, foreign policy is made in all countries by a few hundred people, and in the Soviet Union those people have all been changed, in the party machine as well as in the foreign office. The old guard have gone and the new people are extremely able. Now the plain fact is that though all the experts in all the defence ministries in all the Nato countries were against the final INF agreement, because of Gorbachev, all the governments of those countries had to override their experts and pretend they welcomed it. So there you've had an enormous success which is due to Gorbachev's personal appeal to the people of the West over the heads of their governments. Second success; regional issues. Discussions between Russia and America on the Middle East started between Vance and Gromyko and then they were torpedoed by the invasion of Afghanistan. But since then you've had the Afghanistan settlement, you've had the settlement which has a good chance of succeeding over Angola, you've had a settlement which didn't involve the Americans very directly, but did involve the Chinese over Kampuchea, and you've got a number of other issues of that nature coming along.

Now, I think the great contribution which Gorbachev has already made has been to shift the executive branch into full support of his policy, in such a way that he has been able to attract a response, and a positive response, from Western governments. What I think is worrying the Western governments now is that the process has gone so far that when they get down to the most difficult allied problem of the conventional force balance in Europe, the Western governments are just not used to reacting collectively. They wait for the Americans to give a lead and then they respond, but Germany is no longer prepared for that – Genscher, the German foreign minister, was the first Western leader to recognise the sincerity and importance of Gorbachev. The problem of inter-allied diplomacy which Nato faces is a very difficult one indeed. In the end I think the Americans will probably have to force the issue. Bush wants to cut his forces in Germany. You'll get reciprocal unilateralism because the Americans and the Germans can't keep their forces up to their present levels, the Germans for demographic reasons, the Americans for economic reasons. But it's dangerous if this process takes place only through reciprocal unilateralism, because there are so many policy issues involved which need to be dealt with at the same time: the changing relationship inside the West European countries, inside the East European countries, their relationships with one another – all this needs really to be managed consciously.

Isn't one of the problems with the way in which the West has been reacting to Gorbachev simply that there hasn't been the equivalent degree of original new thinking? The Nato response to the speech, to the cuts and the rest of it, was essentially disappointing. Let me just raise one original piece of thinking, which came from Admiral Schmelling, the now chastised German admiral, who suggested the radical and appalling thought, it seems, of destroying both Nato and the Warsaw Pact military units and coming up with a new scenario. The man is now being removed from active duty for the moment, we will see what happens. But it was an attempt to look at an original way forward and there is surely not enough of that going on in the West ...

Denis The tragedy is that there is a lot going on, but it's not going on at the moment in the governmental machine. The interesting thing is that all my chums in the US when I was defence secretary, like MacNamara and Bundy, have all been making the sort of proposals which Gorbachev is now making. There are lots of people like that in Germany, mainly in the SPD. But getting it through the Nato bureaucracy is appallingly difficult.

But that brings us back to the problem that the West is worried about the survivability of Gorbachev. Everytime you criticise Nato's failure to come up with an original response, the answer comes back, 'but how can we believe that Gorbachev will survive?'

Giorgio On this question of reciprocation, of the Western response. First, I understand why we sometimes use the term 'to help Gorbachev'. But it's not completely correct. Of course, we want to give a positive answer to the opportunities Gorbachev is creating, not only for the West, but for peace and cooperation. But the basis must be mutual advantage, in disarmament, in resolving regional conflicts, in all fields. There is no other possible policy, neither for Gorbachev nor for the West.

I must say, just to be a little more optimistic, that a good example of new thinking was an unofficial but highly authoritative US report entitled 'How should we respond to Gorbachev?' by the Institute for East/West Security

Charles: 'What you've got at the moment is a single person occupying the very centre of the world stage'

Studies. The concept was mutual advantage as a basis for giving answers to Gorbachev. Take the INF treaty. It has been a success for Gorbachev. At the beginning the double zero option was more or less an American propaganda ploy, but eventually it turned out to be a positive answer to the new position of the Soviet leadership. Take regional conflicts. The Soviet Union is again virtually into dialogue and possible negotiation in the Middle East, having been kept out for years. With Nicaragua there has been a certain change, particularly in the American congress. Angola is a success – the Americans can see the withdrawal of the Cubans, but at the same time it is a success for the Soviet Union, and for all people, with the withdrawal of South Africa from Namibia. And in economic terms, Italy, West Germany and France are doing something concretely to intensify trade relations, common projects, common investment programmes, joint ventures, in their own long-term interest and in the interest of the modernisation and growth of the Soviet economy. It is only a beginning, but an interesting beginning.

The most negative point is the answer, if we can call it such, of Nato to proposals on conventional armaments. There was a very strong position taken immediately after Gorbachev's in the UN by the German SPD criticising Nato's too negative attitude and suggesting that it was now possible for the West to unilaterally cut battlefield nuclear weapons. That would be a concrete answer. But I still agree with Denis, the problem is not only to go on with unilateral reciprocal concessions. It is fundamental now to start with serious negotiations after the conclusion of the conference in Vienna and if we can put pressure on our governments, we have some chance.

Denis Could I just make one point about survival? I am very agnostic about the extent to which Gorbachev will achieve the sort of *perestroika* he wants inside the Soviet Union within the timescale he wants to achieve it. I think one has to be uncertain about that. I think that the change in Soviet foreign policy has come to stay, partly because the bureaucratic machine has already been changed, but mainly because what Gorbachev says is true. And forces will move the West to meet the Russians halfway, although it may be a slow business; in some cases it

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may mean changes of personality or changes of government, but I think we then start moving to a much more exciting and fluid situation. The whole international landscape is undergoing enormous changes and with the slow disintegration of the bloc mentality, not just the blocs, I think we are going to have a much more fluid situation which is going to require an enormous amount more diplomatic skill. Diplomatic skill has been really at a discount on both sides for several decades, and I think that on the external side, the facts he's referred to, the impossibility of superpowers fighting one another, even conventionally, the risk he hasn't referred to so much, but which is very apparent, that wars in the Third World will become immensely more destructive as they all get missiles which can carry not only conventional warheads, but chemical warheads, possibly nuc-

Victor: 'Personally, I am against all kinds of walls, including the Berlin wall, but I think it is a question to be decided by the GDR government'

lear warheads, all these problems are coming at us at enormous speed, and I think the important thing is that you establish a working relationship between the blocs quickly so that they are capable of dealing with these new problems which are very difficult to forsee.

Last point, the only place I see real problems for Gorbachev would be if nationalism in some of the Soviet republics rather than Eastern Europe, became too powerful. I see that Abartov made the point, talking to some Americans recently, that the Russians would accept everything except secession, that if there was an attempt to secede, they'd fight. He reminded his American audience that *they* fought against secession in the civil war.

There is an inevitable question which comes to mind when one talks about the gradual loosening of the blocs. What is to happen to the two Germanies and that symbol of less-than-free travel, the wall. What do you think, Victor, is going to happen to the wall?

Victor I expected this question! Personally, I am against all kinds of walls, including the Berlin wall, but I think it is still, to a very large extent, a question to be decided by the government of the German Democratic Republic. I belong to those trends in our foreign policy which are in favour of dismantling the wall, but I do remember being in Berlin and reading on this

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wall the phrase: 'Jews and the Reds to the gas chamber.' Before that, I was of a single-minded opinion that it had to be removed, but this phrase bothered me.

Charles It's a red herring. I spent six years in Berlin as correspondent at various times. That wall is god knows how many miles long. There is graffiti from one end to the other and most of it is about sex. You get lots of people who write the most provocative slogans they can possibly think of on the wall.

Denis You know that on the wall in one place it says that 'sex will stunt your growth' and four feet below 'now he tells me!'

Charles I would suggest that even if Gorbachev and the Soviet leaders wanted that wall down – because it does to a certain extent reflect on the Soviet system as well as on the East German system, and presumably it was never put up by the Germans totally unilaterally – the East Germans would resist it, because what you've not had in East Germany is anything like the political development you've had in other East European countries.

Victor It is a delicate issue, I understand that.

Charles But right now I think you could take it down, I've discussed this with the East Germans many times over the last few years. What you would get is an awful lot of Germans going through the hole if you opened it up in order to visit the West, and I think something like 70 or 80% of them would go back again. And I don't think the reason which caused the wall to be built, namely the draining away of the intelligentsia and the young people of military age, exists any more.

Giorgio The strange thing is the combination in East Germany of ideological rigidity with such an external political flexibility. East Germany has become, as we were saying, the shadow or ghost thirteenth member of the European Community. I don't know whether in dismantling the wall so many people as 20 years ago would go to the West without going back to the East. The situation in East Germany, at least in economic and social terms, is much better than in the past.

Victor I would not overestimate the possibilities of the Soviet Union influencing even its allies, because every socialist country has its own politics and although we are quite unhappy about certain trends in various countries, we can't possibly impose on them now the vision and the ideas that we put forward.

Giorgio We raised the question of Czechoslovakia in our conversations with the Soviet leadership and I must say that my impression is that while the present Czechoslovak leadership was imposed 20 years ago by the Soviet intervention, today the Soviet Union has great difficulty in imposing a change in a democratic direction. And my impression is that Gorbachev and his collaborators are very cautious on all issues regarding Eastern European allies. But I am personally convinced that there was a positive Soviet influence in relation to the decision of the Czechoslovak authorities to give Dubcek permission to visit Italy recently.

Denis I think the problem the Soviet Union has in normalising the polities in Eastern Europe is a very serious one indeed. The Western powers will have to be very sensitive indeed in how they play their part in a process which is bound to happen, in which Eastern Europe may return to the European home before the Soviet Union.

Charles Can we explore where the new commitment to human rights might lead in the context of Eastern Europe. Now, presumably, if human rights includes freedom of expression, it also includes freedom of association, freedom to form political parties, freedom to form opposition parties, freedom to have what the West calls, to use the cliché, 'free elections'. Now what happens if, in a country like Poland, where it is possible to predict the outcome of such an election, you allow an organisation like Solidarity, which is not so much a trade union as a mass movement, to stand and the existing communist government is pushed out of power? You then get what we in the West would call a parliamentary democracy of some kind. Imagine then the country decides to leave the Warsaw Pact, that it no longer wants the same relationship with its socialist neighbour, the Soviet Union. Is such a scenario something that Gorbachev can accept and watch happen as a bystander?

Victor You understand that I can't speak on behalf of Gorbachev! The only thing I can say is that he stressed several times, including in his UN speech, that we do not pretend to be holders of eternal truths. We are prepared to accept criticism, we have committed plenty of blunders and to a certain extent, it's me speaking not Gorbachev, we have demonstrated to the world how not to build socialism rather than how to build it. So speaking of the countries of Eastern Europe, you can't impose your own vision of happiness on them if they wish to go along the lines which you have described. Go ahead, that's my answer, it's up to them. Look at the processes taking place in Hungary. Could you contemplate the idea of Soviet troops intervening in the political processes in Hungary. No. Unimaginable.

Charles Not now, but maybe in 10 years time, yes.

Victor I doubt that. I am a great believer in human progress.

Charles One of the problems is that no one can be absolutely sure that the pendulum might not swing back. I'm not suggesting for a moment that it will, I don't think anything in the Soviet Union will ever quite get back to where it was before. But it is perfectly possible that *perestroika* will fail, *glasnost* will shrink, and that the Brezhnev doctrine will come back.

Giorgio A very strong point made by Gorbachev, which he frequently repeats, is, 'We have no alternative, there is nothing behind us, we cannot withdraw', and he said once, 'I could leave, my collaborators could leave, we could be substituted and for a short period, somebody could go back to the past, but inevitably, the same questions which opened the way to *perestroika* would emerge again.' I think this is a very strong point.

Victor The key to the irreversibility of the changes in our foreign policy lies at home. Democratisation at home is the best guarantee that any state will behave according to certain rules. It remains to be seen whether Western states will be prepared to accept the high standards now set by Gorbachev for foreign policy, based on interdependence and universal human values.

Giorgio You know a Hungarian leader told me a few weeks ago that they were accustoming themselves to the idea that in the next election, on the basis of new rules, the Communist Party will not have an absolute majority in the new parliament. So they are thinking of the possibility of a broad coalition government while retaining the alliance with the Soviet Union. A loosening or softening of the blocs must mean an alliance on rather different terms, with much more autonomy.

Denis The one thing that I think we in the West underestimated, and I personally speak now as someone who lived through that postwar period, has been the obsessive desire of the Russians, after Napoleon and Hitler, to have a really good *cordon sanitaire*. The security element dominated Soviet policy, the desire to keep the enemy as far away as possible. What tipped the balance in Hungary in 1956 in favour of military intervention was Nagy's extremely unwise statement that Hungary would leave the Warsaw Pact. And therefore, if we want to see the developments I think we would all like in Eastern Europe, the really important thing is that the West has got to play its part in guaranteeing Soviet security and that is best done by continuing the process of collective security and interdependence while avoiding provocation, which wasn't the case in 1956 with Hungary when Radio Free Europe was promising all sorts of aid to the opponents of the Soviet regime. ●

Jon: 'Isn't one of the problems with the way in which the West has been reacting to Gorbachev simply that there hasn't been the equivalent degree of original new thinking?'

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Mikhail And The Mullahs

Perhaps the most intractable of all the 'regional' problems is the Middle East. But even there, things are now beginning to move. **Fred Halliday** assesses the impact of Gorbachev's foreign policy in this area

Reflex

Yassir Arafat: Received Gorbachev's message loud and clear

If 1988 saw substantial movement in Soviet foreign policy as a whole, most prominently with the INF agreement and the Geneva accords on Afghanistan, it also registered significant progress in another area – the Middle East. The success of the UN in persuading Iran to accept a cease-fire with Iraq in August 1988 owed not a little to Soviet persuasion of Tehran and to Moscow's collaboration with the other permanent members of the Security Council. The initial breakthrough in US-Palestinian relations in December, following Arafat's speech to the UN in Geneva, came after a long period of Soviet pressure on the PLO to recognise Israel, and a degree of encouragement to Washington to yield a little on this. After years of virtual exclusion from the Middle East, following Egypt's turn to the West in the mid-1970s, the USSR now appears to be an influential force in the region again.

This is a development of great importance, not only for the area itself, but also for Soviet-US relations and for 'new thinking', the fresh approach to international relations proclaimed by Gorbachev, as a whole: the Middle East has been a major obstacle to improved Soviet relations with the West, and much of the drive to break out of established impasses comes from this strategic concern. If 'new thinking' tries to solve Third World problems, it is equally concerned, failing complete success on the ground, to reduce the impact which these regional issues have on international relations generally.

Soviet policy in the Middle East can, indeed, be seen as a product of the much

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broader reformulation of foreign policy taking place in Moscow. Third World issues cannot, it is now believed, be solved by military means, and Third World states have to learn to find political solutions, with rival states and with internal oppositions: inter-state compromises on territory and levels of armaments, and, within states, 'national reconciliation', are to be the goals. At the same time, Soviet policy is trying to prevent ongoing Third World conflicts from exacerbating Moscow's relations with the West: hence the search for joint positions with the USA on the Gulf War and the Arab-Israeli dispute, and Gorbachev's new emphasis on the role of the UN is actively pursuing solutions and policing agreements.

An equally important general component of 'new thinking' is the emphasis placed by Soviet officials upon improving relations with 'all countries, large and small'. In practice, this means not so much getting away from the priorities of the pre-1985 period, ie, the USA, China and Western Europe, as working to improve relations with smaller states that had been ignored or consistently antagonised in the previous period, above all by Gromyko: in the Middle East this category includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia and, of course, Israel. Soviet willingness to talk to all of these, even when there are no diplomatic relations, has already borne fruit.

Soviet policy on the Middle East also, as in the USA, reflects domestic factors operating within the USSR. While Soviet foreign policy is by no means simply a result of internal factors, there has always been a factional element in policy towards the Middle East. With the emergence of strong Russian nationalist currents, there is open opposition to re-establishing diplomatic relations with Israel. At the same time, for internal reasons and in order to improve relations with the USA, Gorbachev has sought to remove the issues of Jewish opposition and emigration. He is also, as part of his anti-corruption drive, particularly keen to reform the Muslim republics where 'stagnation' took special and deep-rooted forms: the shake-ups in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, and the dangers posed by anti-Armenian chauvinism in the latter, allegedly under the influence of Khomeini's Iran next door, have produced a situation in which *perestroika* has acquired a quite confrontational relationship with the Islamic republics of the USSR.

In the first three years of Gorbachev's rule, foreign and defence policy were still largely exempt from public debate and criticism. But the tone of business-like criticism that has prevailed in internal Soviet discussion is now increasingly being applied to Soviet relations with allies, and especially those of the socialist bloc. Gorbachev has attacked 'sugar-coated' speeches and reports in inter-party and inter-socialist relations, and one of the hallmarks of 1988 was the emergence of 'international *glasnost*', ie, criticism in the Soviet media of Soviet foreign policy in the 'stagnation' period and criticism of Third World socialist states.

The Soviet press has given prominent and disabused coverage to events in the 'socialist-oriented' state of Burma, but has equally criticised the illusions of other Third World allies who are, it is said, besotted with ultra-left slogans and too prone to militaristic solutions. This line of argument could, above all, refer to Arab allies such as Iraq, Syria, Libya and South Yemen, who must now be distinctly uncomfortable about how things are going in the USSR. If Fidel Castro has been most open in articulating such a Third World revolutionary critique of 'new thinking', his words have certainly found an echo in Aden, Tripoli and Damascus.

'Third world issues cannot, it is now believed, be solved by military means, and Third World States have to learn to find political solutions'

The most obvious area in which 'new thinking' has had a specific impact on the Middle East is in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Soviet dealings with Israel still fall short of re-establishing the diplomatic relations broken by Moscow in 1967, and the USSR has said that these will only be restored once Israel participates in an international conference on resolving the Arab-Israeli dispute. But there have nonetheless been several substantial shifts in Soviet-Israeli relations. Consular delegations from each country, on extendable three-month visas, are now resident in Tel Aviv and Moscow. The USSR has massively increased the rate of Jewish emigration to around 20,000 in 1988 and an anticipated 30,000 in 1989: given the Israeli figure of 80,000 wishing to leave, this means that the problem is no longer an issue between the two states. In addition, up to 6,000 Soviet Jews visited Israel last year as tourists, flying via Damascus and Larnaca, and another 6,000 visited the USA; according to Israeli sources all 'prisoners of Zion' have been released from incarceration in the USSR. Most importantly of all, and separate from the consular missions, a direct diplomatic channel has been established between Soviet and Israeli foreign ministry officials. Israeli government members routinely call their Soviet opposite numbers on the phone. An Israeli rescue team, including Jewish emigres from Soviet Armenia, took part in the earthquake relief work this December.

There remain substantial issues of disagreement in Soviet-Israeli relations. One concerns emigration: only around 5% of the Soviet Jews who now emigrate choose to go to Israel, the great majority preferring the USA. Israel would like them to be flown directly to Tel Aviv, avoiding the Vienna transit point currently used: but this has come up against strong opposition – from the Dutch, who handle Israeli interests in Moscow, and from the USA, which regards any such measure as an infringement of civil liberties. Most substantially, the two sides remain far apart on the nature of an international conference, and on the shape of a final settlement.

Israel, prior to and after the November 1988 election, refuses to accept an international conference or negotiation with the Palestinians, preferring instead bilateral talks between Israel and Arab states. The USSR has shifted somewhat, accepting that a Palestinian delegation may, with Palestinian consent, form part of a wider Arab delegation, and, secondly, that after an initial plenary convention, negotiations may take place in a bilateral form. But Moscow remembers how it was excluded during the 1974 Geneva conference on the question, and still insists on a solution being negotiated in the form of a plenipotentiary gathering.

The Soviet change with regard to Israel reflects several considerations. There is evidently a broad international aspect, the desire to work towards a reduction and possible resolution of a major 'regional' issue that has since the 1973 war bedevilled US-Soviet relations. There is, especially on the question of Jewish emigration, the desire to remove an issue that has persisted ever since the Jackson-Vanick amendment blocked an improvement in trade relations in 1974. But there are at least two other factors in Soviet thinking. One is that China is now an actor in the Arab-Israeli dispute, having forged covert but wide-ranging military links with Israel, just as it has with Iran. This competition from Peking is something the USSR cannot view with indifference. The other new factor is that Israel now possesses the capacity to hit the southern cities of the USSR with nuclear weapons using Jericho II missiles, with a range of 900 miles: Moscow must, therefore, regard with even greater alarm the prospect of a future Arab-Israeli dispute, which could lead to the use of nuclear weapons in the Middle East itself, and therefore beyond.

Parallel to this change in Soviet-Israeli relations have come a number of changes in Soviet relations with the Arab world. Moscow has worked to improve relations with Egypt, its former main ally in the Arab world, and has rescheduled Egypt's military debt. For all its ties to Washington, Cairo realises the Camp David process has stalled and it shares Moscow's view on the need for an international conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. Moscow is also engaged in an active dialogue with Saudi Arabia: technically, diplomatic relations between these two countries have not been broken – it is 'merely' that no ambassadors have been posted since the 1930s. In the Middle Eastern context and over Afghanistan there have been wide-ranging discussions between officials of the two states for quite some time.

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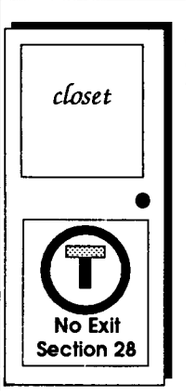

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Moscow's Arab policy are with regard to the PLO and to Syria. Moscow has always held, in line with the UN vote of 1947, that the solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute lies in the creation of two states, one Israeli and one Palestinian. Until recently, however, its appeals to the PLO to acknowledge this, the only realistic or just solution, have fallen on deaf ears. Arab 'rejectionism', ie, demagogic self-delusion, has prevailed. Over the past two years, however, Soviet influence with the Palestinians has borne fruit in two respects. First, in April 1987, Soviet diplomacy, flanked by that of some Arab states, re-established a degree of unity in the PLO under Arafat, after years of intense factionalism encouraged by Syria, Iraq and Libya. Then, in November 1988 the PLO publicly accepted the right of Israel to exist, and declared its willingness to negotiate with Israel. If the USSR was far from being alone in pressing the PLO to take this step, Soviet influence, coming as it did from the Arab world's most powerful supporter, was crucial. During his visit to the USSR in April 1988 Arafat had been publicly enjoined by Gorbachev to recognise Israel, and the message had certainly been received loud and clear.

The other crucial dimension of Soviet relations with the Arabs concerns Syria, the recipient of more Soviet weapons over the past two decades than Vietnam and a key player in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Since the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Moscow has warned Israel and the USA not to try an all-out attack on Syria, provided Soviet missiles, and, for some time, Soviet crews to reinforce Syrian defences. Most recently, the Syrians have received Mig-29 planes. But Moscow has also stated that it does not accept Syrian demands for 'parity' with Israel, and views such requests as a recipe for an unending escalation of the Middle East arms race. Moscow has also shown that it disapproves of Syrian policies with regard to the Palestinians: Damascus' support for factions using terrorism, and for those who oppose Arafat's new orientations.

The difficulties which Moscow faces in reconciling its policies towards the Arabs and Israel are, indeed, reproduced within the Arab world itself. Moscow has tried, in vain, to reconcile Syria and Iraq, and Libya and Egypt. It has also sought to balance support for the Palestinian *intifada* with a warning that the time for stones and rifles must give way to that of diplomacy. In the belief that it must maintain relations with Iraq, a long-standing ally, it has refrained from open criticism of the crimes committed against the Kurds, despite many appeals from Iraqi Kurds and demands from representatives of an estimated 100,000 Kurds within the USSR, who have their own weekly newspaper, for Moscow to voice its disapproval.

Moscow also has special problems with Iran, where the Islamic regime is now entering its second decade. In Moscow's eyes, it is the intransigence of the mollahs that enabled the USA to gain such a prominent military position in the Persian Gulf. Iran has also added to Moscow's problems in Afghanistan, supporting its own Shi'ite guerrillas and denouncing even the Geneva accords. Tehran radio continues to call for revolt among Soviet Muslims, and the Soviet media report that the anti-Armenian rioters in Azerbaijan have carried portraits of Khomeini. Yet in the Persian Gulf conflict, as in the Arab-Israeli, the USSR has certainly made substantial progress in the past year.

'Success in the Middle East depends on what the US reaction is. It takes two to engage in new thinking'

The significance of these advances must be offset, however, by the enormous amount that still remains to be done. At one level, Moscow appeals in the name of a reasonable compromise and 'internationalist' collaboration between different Third World peoples for an end to nationalist intransigence: but this, one of the most commendable aspects of 'old thinking', has found too few adherents in the Middle East, and, as events in the Baltic Republics and in Azerbaijan have illustrated, has shown its limits even within the USSR; at another level, success in the Middle East depends on what the US reaction is. It takes two to engage in 'new thinking' and in a range of places, from Kabul to Managua, and including the Middle East, it remains open whether the USA is yet willing to alter its policies. ●

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New Times
Vorsprung Durch Rethink

Doesn't New Times require a new politics? Doesn't it mean going beyond the traditional socialist project? Göran Therborn argues for a life-chance politics which marks a break with much conventional socialist thought

Abel Lagos

'I am assuming no change in the everyday mixture of good and evil in Mr Smith or Ms Jones'

Three concepts are sufficient to sum up a long-term socialist or, if you prefer, radical-humanist project: human life-realisation, universality, and history. Universal human life-realisation is, in a nutshell, what socialism is about, with the addition that it has a location and a range in historical time. It is not a moment, or even a lifetime, of bliss only, but a period rooted in the past and connecting itself with the future.

A *vision* of it may be seen as the outside of a sphere, with open horizons in every direction, some spaces in varying shades of daylight with people peacefully and autonomously going about myriad activities, difficult to distinguish between work or play, not to speak of between rewarding and bare subsistence-yielding activities. Some people are acting alone, others in smaller or larger groups, leaders and led may exist, but are impossible to distinguish from afar. Locales vary seemingly infinitely, but slums, rural holes of misery or concentration camps are nowhere to be seen. A certain clean freshness is hanging in the air and sparkles in the water. Other spaces are in the dark but penetrable to the visionary, who sees well-fed people in safe, well-sheltered sleep, people in the passion of love-making, individuals awake with sleepless eyes wrestling with the demons of creation, or others being born, lying sick or dying, with caring fellow-humans at their bedside. The visionary is looking at Earth from inner space and sees a multi-faceted human life without systematic violence, coercion, misery, and degradation, without sorting mechanisms condemning categories of human beings to having a large portion of their children die as babies, falling prey to famines, preventable diseases, poverty, humiliation, exploitation, lack of care, and to a cruel or unnecessary death.

As this vision is meant to be part of a rational political discourse, it is open to a number of objections. In other words, in forwarding a planetary vision of humanity in daylight and at night, I accept the obligation of a rational reasoner to provide reasons for sceptics to see it as a possible future, and as a future worth striving for. Indeed, I am trying to develop an argument in dialogue with critics.

A Debate With A Liberal Sceptic And A Modern Socialist

Round One: About Evil And Emancipation

Liberal Sceptic Your so-called socialist vision is little more than a dream of a world without evil. That may be a noble dream, but it provides no indications of how to get there. And, after all, is it worthy of a rational social scientist (politician, writer, activist, citizen – delete what is not appropriate) to promise a world without evil?

Modern Socialist On this point, if only on this, I agree completely with my liberal enemy, but I would add . . .

Answer Wait a minute, let us stop here for a moment. My vision is something significantly different from, or less than, a wish for a world without evil. The world I am talking of is a world without *systems* of evil, without systematic mechanisms allocating fortune or misery, without, to quote an already half-forgotten Hollywood actor, 'empires of evil'. I am assuming no change in the everyday mixture of good and evil in Mr Smith or Ms Jones. And I think I am rare among utopians having envisaged, in a one-paragraph summary of paradise, people bed-ridden with sickness, and people dying.

Modern Socialist All right, but it is still very abstract and vapoury. More than that, even at the level of supreme principles you seem to be fucking things up. The communist and socialist project has always had a clear goal, universal human emancipation. Why are you leaving out the goal of emancipation? Has it become too revolutionary, 'fundamentalist' even, perhaps?

Answer This is a crucial difference between modernism and post modernity, which has dawned upon me only lately. I honestly do not think that a socialist or radical project can be summed up in terms of 'emancipation' any more. Emancipation is a key to the politics of modernity, a politics of liberation from the shackles of the *ancien régime*, or of traditional society, monarchical rule supposedly by the grace of God, class exploitation, bigotry, prejudice, patriarchy, racism. Emancipation remains on the agenda in most parts of the world, above all, in the form of women's emancipation, but also of ethnic/national and class. However, the concept of emancipation presupposes that of oppression/exploitation, as a clear baseline from which to move. In advanced capitalist democracies it is difficult, and unconvincing, to conceive of women or workers as generally and unqualifiedly oppressed and as exploited (other than in the accountant's sense of an academic class analysis). Such societies do contain features of oppression and exploitation, and thereby tasks of emancipation, but the former do not hold as general characteristics of life in those societies. *Human life-realisation* has the advantage of not being tied to one linear movement, from oppression to freedom, but of connoting, at the same time, an infinite plurality of life-projects and a universal yardstick, the human life-span universally possible at a given level of world resources and medical knowledge.

Round Two: About Life And The Economy

Liberal Sceptic And Modern Socialist Your vision seems to entail a biologisation of politics and of social life. Does that mean that you accept the current capitalist economy as the most efficient one?

Answer No-one but a fool would say that the present is the best of all possible worlds. Only hopeless utopians

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may dream of capitalism lasting for ever. But it is true that I have reformulated the socialist project, from being couched in terms of property, markets, and the state, into basic concerns of human life.

Liberal Sceptic But that implies a recognition of markets and of capitalism, doesn't it?

Answer Of markets yes, of capitalism no. The marxist conception of socialism was based on an analysis of capitalism asserting its intrinsic contradictoriness. The development of capitalism would bring about an increasing dysfunctionality between the private relations of production and the increasingly public(ly dependent) forces of production. That did happen, up to about 1950, expressed in the socialisation of mass communications and mass transport, even of natural resources held to constitute the 'commanding heights' of the economy. For another 15 years there was the establishment of a public management of the economy, of its growth rate and its business cycle. The process of international cartelisation, which culminated in the 1930s, was part of the same tendency. Since then, however, the world market and the multinational corporation have reasserted themselves. against both cartels and states, although the publicly managed economy remains – and will remain.

Liberal Sceptic But why don't you then accept the superiority of the capitalist market? Isn't that what it implied both in the reforms of Deng Hsiao Ping and in the *perestroika* of Gorbachev?

'In contrast to traditional socialists I am not sure what the new institutions needed would look like'

Answer The functioning of the market is dependent on the initial distribution of endowments, and the current distribution of resources in the world denies the possibility of a decent human life to hundreds of millions of people. That distribution has to be changed. There seems to be no empirical evidence, that speculative financial markets have any positive function in what serious liberal economists sometimes call 'the real economy', and often the former have clearly negative effects on production and work. The increasing power of financial capital has to be reversed. The market is furthermore a poor mechanism for dealing with fundamental human questions – for which there are no clear compensatory trade-offs – with choices of rare frequency and/or of special information requirement. The market can function rather well with regard to your choice of consumer goods, but rather badly, for instance, with respect to what old-age care you, as a resourceful prime-age adult, may need in the far-off future as an elderly person.

Intellectually, it is interesting that probably the most popular metaphor of contemporary rational action theory is 'the prisoner's dilemma', which is a sad story of two or more people who cannot communicate and co-operate with each other, and who therefore, as rational egoists, end up much worse than they would have scored if they had been able to co-operate. This example teaches us a lesson exactly opposite to that of the 'invisible hand' of the market.

Round Three: About Socialism And Liberalism

Modern Socialist But if you hold those views, why don't you present a clear picture of a socialist economy? Instead you are presenting a vision devoid of any concrete institutions. Wouldn't it be more honest to say, in your case, that you are abandoning the idea of socialism for another vision or utopia of a more general humanistic kind?

Answer The vision I am seeing presupposes a complete overhaul of the distribution of endowments, of property and propertylessness, and a complete change of the relationships between financial and productive institutions. Those changes would entail a universal equalisation of life-chances and a decisive role allotted to productive, in contrast to merely appropriating, creativity. Therefore, my vision implies a number of crucial institutional changes, which are all contained within the traditions of socialism. However, in contrast to classical socialists I am not sure what the new institutions needed would look like exactly.

Liberal Sceptic Fine, but isn't that tantamount to civilised liberalism?

Answer In case you should recognise your liberalism in my vision, or somebody else social democracy, christian democracy, ecologism, or x-, y- or z-ism, I would be happy, because that would mean a broadened support for it. The sectarian preoccupation with drawing demarcation lines is alien to me.

Liberal Sceptic Thank you, but doesn't that amount to an abandonment of socialism as a specific political tendency?

Answer There is a basic continuity with modern socialism, in universalism, in historicity, and in concentrating on scrutinising and changing the content of social and political forms, the social human contents of political constitutions and sets of juridical rights, and the structuring of situations of choice with systematic outcomes of affluence on the one side and misery on the other.

Round Four: On History And Historical Tendencies

Modern Socialist Why do you put such an emphasis on history in your three concepts summary? Isn't that more than anything else a cover-up for the fact that you have substituted a utopian vision for the marxist theory of history?

Answer No, the reason is an aim at retaining a link with 'scientific socialism', ie, with the location of socialism in actually existing history. But I had also something else in mind, more directly related to my conception of life politics. A vision of a better world must contain a sense of link with, and thereby responsibility for, the future, for coming generations. No generation has the right to destroy life-chances for the next one(s). That is a constraint on universal life-realisation.

Modern Socialist Talk about 'history' is not enough! The scientificity of historical materialism's conception of socialism was that it analysed how the latter developed out of the contradictions and of the social conflicts of capitalism. But your so-called vision is not derived from any analysis of historical tendencies of contradiction and conflict. You are only holding up a picture, hoping that some people will find it attractive. Do you see any social forces with an interest or tendency to bring them about?

Answer The most concrete answer to your first question is that my vision involves a universalisation and a deepening of the institutions of the most advanced welfare states. Secondly, it follows up the vital issues brought on to the historical agenda by the progressive women's movement, of gender relations, modes of human reproduction, and of the quality of personal relations in the systems of institutional forms. Thirdly, my vision expresses an alignment with the actualisation of basic questions of the character of the human environment put forward by the ecological movement. What I see are all tendencies of the 'new times'.

Modern Socialist Is it deliberate that you refrain from referring to any economic tendencies of contemporary capitalism?

Answer The welfare state, the women's uprising, environmental concerns have all grown out of affluent developed capitalism, out of forces and issues generated within it, although the processes have been very complex and are irreducible to a purely economic dialectic. Between these tendencies and capitalism, there are fundamental conflicts, which does not mean incompatibility or impossibility of coexistence, however. After all, life is not incompatible with violence, cruelty, and fraud, for instance. But wouldn't you admit that life would be more pleasant without them?

Liberal Sceptic Why don't you relate to the rise of the post-industrial knowledge economy with its substitution of information for toil and capital, of networks for hierarchy, of flexibility for rigid rules, of de-centralisation for centralisation?

Answer The tendencies of contemporary capitalism are ambiguous in their social implications. While Taylorist, army-type bureaucracies are clearly on their way out, industrial production is of declining economic weight, and the computerisation of information and of the use of information are clearly of rapidly growing economic importance, no clear pattern

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is emerging, bestseller ideologies notwithstanding. The global centralisation of corporate power is growing simultaneously with decentralisation within corporate organisations. Union busting and idiosyncratic personal management are increasing alongside more and more autonomous personnel involvement. Rent for attractive, increasingly scarce natural estate, and for urban real estate is rapidly growing in importance in contemporary capitalism. The manipulation of, or privileged exclusive access to, information are becoming increasingly important means of capital accumulation. And so forth. Very significant in these ambiguously contradictory economic tendencies is, I think, the growing role of a large category of qualified employees, overcoming manual/non-manual divisions, the commitment and the sophisticated life-demands of whom productive capital is getting crucially dependent upon. People of this kind are already providing much of the support for new humanistic movements, and given an institutional chance they could also give a new impetus to the labour movement. The counter-strategy of capital and conservatism, however, is to try to segment these employees in corporate and local loyalties and to isolate them from the rest of the population, from the bulk of the service workers, traditional production workers, the unemployed, and the retired.

'Begin to formulate the tasks of radical politics in terms of people's life-environment and their life-chances'

The two basic institutions of welfare states are (membership) rights and care. As a member of a relevant category, as a citizen, or as a member of some other group, you as a person have a right to certain services and forms of support, regardless of your property status and of your ability to pay the going market price. Secondly, most of what existing welfare states do is to provide care for people, care for the sick, the infirm, and the elderly, care for children to grow up and learn. The rights of persons and taking care of people have a tense, conflictual relation to the principle of exclusion inherent in the notions of property and purchase, and to the production and circulation of commodities.

The women's movement challenged the male particularisms in the prevailing conceptions of freedom and equality, solidarity and socialism. In that respect the movement has been a tendency of universalism. Pertinent in this context is also another feature of the feminist insurrection, its concern with the quality of personal human relations – between men and women above all, but also among women, among men, and between adults and children. Autonomy, dignity, authenticity, concern in human relations are standards or demands raised in defiance of instrumentalism and commodification. A third aspect of the women's movement that I find particularly appealing, is its combination of a radical individualism with collective action and solidarity. Feminism challenged the unproblematised collectivity of the family – the hidden cupboard of most bourgeois individualism, a cupboard full of victims of patriarchal power and despotism. It did that pointing towards a more authentic individualism, which at the same time entailed a universalistic concern with and care for other human beings.

The ecological movement has put life environment at the centre of attention. Like all radical movements, including the classical socialist one, it also contains dubious elements, fragile prophecies of imminent doom, puritanical moralisms an upper middle-class neglect of the work and housing environment of ordinary people. However, ecologists have made invaluable contributions to a new life politics, demonstrating the lethal or seriously damaging, unnecessary threats of pollution, poisoning, and the destruction of nature.

Round Five: The Welfare State And Statism

Liberal Sceptic But isn't the welfare state a bureaucratic dinosaur which is now being challenged both from the Left and the Right as something which has to be replaced, or at least cut down, by a 'welfare society', of one form or another?

Answer You are mistaking the current institutional forms for the basic principles of the welfare state, and the current ideological steam around those forms. The core of the welfare state is that the reproduction of the population of a given political entity is a public, political responsibility. Neither Thatcher nor Reagan and their acolytes have been able to challenge the right of people in need to support and to service. Neither has been able to do away with institutions of human care and concern. The development of the productive forces, of science and technology, will require more education, rather than less. The growth of medical knowledge and technology will raise the demand and the supply of care in the future. Ageing populations will need much more care.

It is certainly not inconceivable, that the current right-wing tendencies of restricting the services and the care given to the ordinary human being without property, and the properly conducted insurance policy to the shoddiest possible minimum, will continue, and even aggravate. But the life politics issues of human reproduction, of the education, the curing, the caring, and the keeping healthy of the population will not go away. Nor will they be buried in families and networks outside common political responsibility and organisation. The traditional socialist Left has lost sight of the meaning of the welfare state through a myopia of economic functionalism and a macho preoccupation with 'high politics'.

Liberal Sceptic But surely, any serious attempt at new thinking would have to break with the statism of the traditional Left?

Answer True, that the public corporation and the planning commissariat, even some of the large public health care authorities, no longer inspire the confidence and enthusiasm they once did. But statism or antistatism is not the real issue. To put the choices in those terms is a diversionary manoeuvre. What is needed is to put the most important social problems into focus, and then to discuss the proper institutional forms. For everybody on this earth to have a chance to realise a decent life, in view of the resources and the knowledge available to humankind today, a lot of public political intervention and regulation will be absolutely necessary. But new forms of public intervention and organisation will certainly be called for. I am no reliable defender of actually existing welfare state forms, but you will never lure me into any statism-antistatism debate.

Round Six: Social Forces

Modern Socialist You never answered directly my question about the possible social forces that might be mobilised for your utopia. I also wonder, from what you did say, if you mean that there is a growing contradiction between capitalism and what you call universal life-realisation?

Answer There has been so much growth in the contradictions of capitalism in past socialist rhetoric, that considerable caution seems proper for a while. I am not saying that the internal contradictions of contemporary capitalism are growing or are likely to grow in the foreseeable future. What I am saying, is that the conflicts between capitalism, even advanced affluent capitalism, on the one hand, and the universal possibility of realising a meaningful, dignified, and reasonably decent and healthy life do not show the slightest tendency to disappear. And at least in some areas the gap between the potential and the actuality of human life is definitely increasing. We see that in the expansion of poverty in the United States, in the enduring, American-type ghetto-producing mass unemployment in most parts of Western Europe, in the increased pollution of many cities and waters, in the growing destruction of children and youth (visible in addiction, violence, crime, and prostitution), in the glaringly inadequate care for the elderly also in the richest countries, in the increase of misery in large parts of the Third World, and in the persisting threats of ecological disaster.

Life politics has no single or even central subject. That is a handicap in short-term power politics. On the other hand, it can, or might, draw upon a broad spectrum of social and cultural forces, which in terms of long and medium-term societal transformations

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is a source of strength.

The labour movement, in so far as it is a class movement rather than an aggregate of interest groups pursuing sectional interests, and the movements of the popular classes or the poor people of the Third World, in so far as they are movements of popular needs rather than merely waves of frustration or objects of demogogy, are certainly necessary forces. Without them, life politics would tend to become a concern for the quality of life among the affluent and prosperous only.

Women, not just the women's movement, are and will probably become another major force. Whatever the reasons, women are, and seem likely to remain (as far as we can see), over-represented in reproductive work (paid as well as unpaid) and tend to be more concerned with the quality of the human condition. In the past, family seclusion and confinement to a narrowly religious interpretation of existential issues tended to make women more politically conservative than men. That is now changing, and turning the other way around. Of course, women constitute no one tendency, and they will continue to spread over the political spectrum. But it seems likely, that women will have a strong, stronger than men, tendency to support radical politics for universal human life-realisation.

Various aspects of what I have here called life politics is also what various groups of concerned middle-class people, mostly professionals of one kind or another, have already committed themselves to. Environmentalist groups, human rights groups, people concerned with helping victims of famines, disasters, and of persecution. While here there has been an erosion and a demoralisation of the traditional Left, the right-wing politics currently in vogue in several countries does not seem to have extinguished, or even lowered, commitments to specific issues of humanistic concern, does not seem to have lowered the vistas of the whole middle classes to political concerns with taxation rates, mortgage interests, and portfolio trajectories only.

'The gist of my argument is that the issues of life environment and life chance should be put first, and that the economic institutions adequate to that will be found later'

Liberal Sceptic But if there are so many people and movements of goodwill, why does the world then look the way you say it does? Or do you mean, that paradise is imminent?

Answer My answer to your second question is no, and to your first would be too long to print here. But, as a general point, the people of this world are caught up in a welter of conflicting situations, structured by a starkly unequal distribution of resources, constrained by economic competition and power rivalry, and affected by unintended, unforeseen, as well as by conflicting consequences of action. The progressive forces I referred to above are also entangled in this web. What is needed is to cut a path on which a life politics can stand tall, can see its own vista, and can walk forward. That task of clearance is first a task of reorienting the political debate, such as we are doing here. How such a reorientation should take shape in line-ups for power for change is a later question. And, changing the terms of prevailing discussion will already in itself bring about some changes in existing institutions and configurations of power.

Round Seven: A Summing Up Of Issues

Modern Socialist Please, could you formulate the reorientation you are talking about into an understandable everyday political language? What do you want us to do?

Answer I am not going to present a party platform nor a blueprint for the next socialist revolution. But I will sum up my argument in a few points. What I am suggesting is, first of all, to take a step behind economic and political institutions and to begin to formulate the tasks of radical (socialist, progressive, humanist, democratic) politics in terms of people's life-environment and their life-chances, of everybody's possibility of realising the full potentiality of human life, with the constraint that this possibility should be preserved for future members of humankind.

This perspective puts certain issues and political tasks in the foreground.

- Disarmament (not necessarily unilateral), arms control, attempts at preventing or defusing armed conflicts.
- Universalistic human solidarity, fighting racism, sexism and ethnic oppression, overcoming exclusivist nationalisms.
- Health and adequate healthcare for everybody, which means a frontal assault on national, ethnic, and class differences in mortality, morbidity, and well-being; provision of decent care for the infirm and for the elderly.
- Education to enable a full participation in a continuously developing society with a secure milieu of growth for all children and youth, and possibilities for further education for adults.
- A distribution of material resources and rewards egalitarian enough to make a decent human life a possibility for everybody, which means massive efforts at restructuring the material life chances of people within most countries (not least Britain), and the construction of new forms of cross-national support and development co-operation.
- A restructuring of personal and social relations so as to render individual autonomy possible for all women as well as for all men.
- Work, with basic health safety, and potential for human growth for everybody who wants to take part in the economy. An organisation of social time which makes it possible and easy for people to arrange their life-time according to their choice of remunerated work, care for children, kin, and friends, education and re-training, and of leisure and re-creation.
- De-pollution of air and water, econmic growth and life-realisation only under the constraint of nature conservation. Nature has to be recognised politically and economically for what most of us know privately already, that nature should not just be an object of human conquest, since it is a basic aspect of the quality of human life. Large efforts have to be made at finding out and doing something about the life-damaging consequences of produced substances and waste products, and of various human practices.
- A reorganisation of urban life and of the different opportunities in cities and in the countryside with a view to the abolition of slums and metropolitan congestion and to steering the trade-off between anonymous freedom and, on the other hand, vandalism, violence, criminality, and abandoned despair into more positive directions.

Liberal Sceptic Beautiful! and who is to foot the bill?

Answer All of us. This cannot be paid for by the rich only. But almost all of us will also benefit from it, to a larger or smaller extent.

Modern Socialist You didn't say a word about capitalism, or, for that matter, socialism!

Answer The gist of my argument is, that the issues of life environment and life chances should be put first, and that the economic institutions most adequate to the former will have to be found out later. The issues I give priority to are certainly different from maximising capital accumulation. Nay, they require a drastic restriction of the sway of capitalist property and capital accumulation. In that sense they follow a classical socialist line. On the other hand, I am quite aware of the dynamism of a market economy and of the requirement of economic and administrative managerial competence. In order to give everybody on this earth a decent life environment and decent life chances we need a very efficient economy and very efficient forms of organisation in all walks of life. Markets and professional management will without doubt be necessary. But for the rest, what organisational forms and systems we should head for I am not sure of. The crucial thing is, in my opinion, that the latter will be geared to the goal of giving everybody the possibility of realising the full potential of a human life in a fresh environment.

Round Eight . . .

The Editor You haven't allowed your opponents to concede defeat or to be knocked out, so this could go on for ever. But, in case you should want to publish these scribbles you had better stop now!

Answer Yes sir. ●

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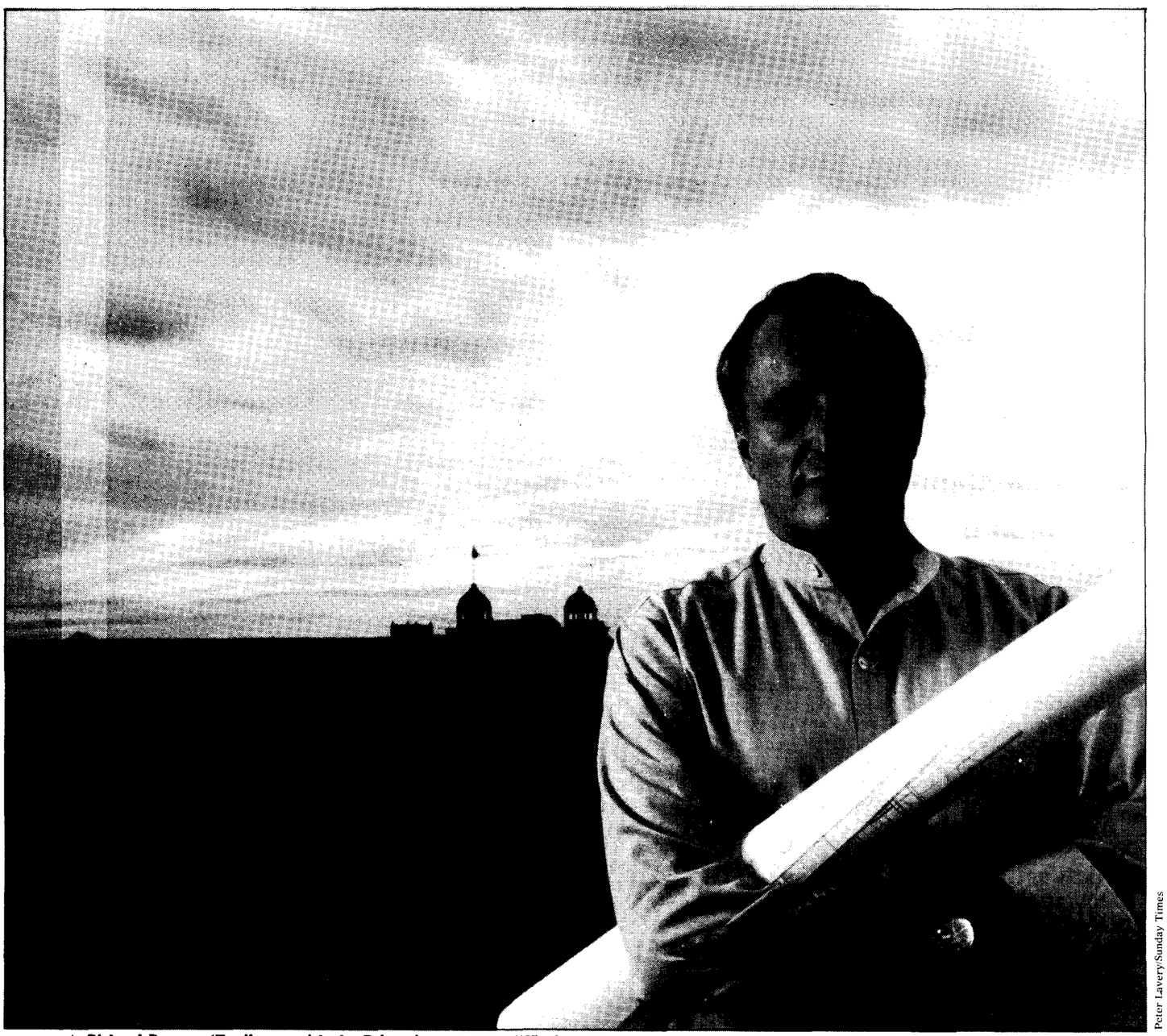

Peter Lavery/Sunday Times

Richard Rogers: 'To discuss with the Prince is very, very difficult when everybody is bowing and scraping and bending their knee'

The Modern Principle

Richard Rogers is Britain's best-known architect and a staunch defender of the hi-tech modernist architecture exemplified by the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Lloyd's Building in the City of London. **Beatrix Campbell** interviewed him

Tell us first of all about your 1986 exhibition at the Royal Academy. It was called 'London As It Could Be'. What was it all about?

I've always been interested in London as a meeting place for people, a human, beautiful place, which it might have been in, say, Georgian times. It was full of inhuman back-to-back housing but the great parks were built, the Nash terraces, all those things which probably gave London great culture in comparison with other cities, which I think it is losing now.

In 1983 the National Gallery held a competition for an extension to one side of the Gallery. Instead of just doing another building we recommended a pedestrian route to link up Leicester Square with Trafalgar Square. One of the problems with Trafalgar Square is that you can't do anything there – except feed the pigeons or occasionally

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have political meetings. So what was once called 'the heart of an empire' in the 19th century has become a traffic island. We said: 'No more offices in Trafalgar Square: it's a public place. There should be shops, cafes, public activities.' And by saying it would function better with shops and so on, we were making a statement about changing the economic structure of that area as well.

Had you previously thought about London as a problem, about the extinction of the River Thames as a focus?

I'm an urban person by nature. I've always been interested in beautiful squares, whether it's Piazza San Marco or Il Campo in Sienna, places to walk and so on. I lived for five years in Paris, and one of the nice things there is that you can actually walk all over the place, whereas London, because of all its great parks (which are fantastic), and the fact that it has all grown out of villages, is all dispersed. Bicycle's the only way you can manage it, you certainly can't walk. The idea of weaving and linking together spaces has been seriously eroded by traffic. Traffic is the big city problem of the 20th century: it cuts cities up in all directions.

The Coin Street development on the South Bank at Waterloo gave a tremendous opportunity to look at the Thames. In London the Thames is a barrier. Most of our bridges don't actually go just from bank to bank: just take Waterloo Bridge: it's actually double the length of the distance between its banks. There's also traditionally very few shops and so on around our bridges, whereas in nearly every other city the bridge forms a sort of nucleus.

Why has it happened that way in London?

The British love has been pubs, clubs, private gardens and parks, as against street life and cafes. We're basically an inward-looking society.

Over the Coin Street development you found yourself on the 'other' side – against the local community and with the capitalist developer.

Yes. I was. But I think the real argument was about whether that South Bank area was *local* or *national*. I saw it as an opportunity to try and create a stepping stone between the richer northern and poorer southern river banks. I didn't see it as a very good place for your two-storey house. I don't have anything specifically against offices. If offices are bad, it's because the society that we live in tends to give all the goodies to private enterprises. There are offices right down to the ground on major thoroughfares. That means that the public has lost the public realm. Only 2% of all the ground in Coin Street was to be private riverside offices. All offices were to start at the second floor, whereas all the ground was to be either shopping, leisure or housing.

People always say to me: 'If you had the possibility of creating a sort of Pompidou Centre, would you do it there?' The answer was 'yes', but I didn't: unlike France, the government wasn't going to produce the money. There were good arguments for fewer offices and more government-financed situations there. The next best thing one can do is to persuade the developer to put in as much money as possible for public activities.

Coin Street took a long time in my life: a year at the public inquiry, being torn to pieces by the local community. Sure, that was uncomfortable.

What did you feel about their grounds?

If I had been the local community I could well understand their point. There were people saying: 'Look, but I've always had a view of the Thames here.' And I would say: 'Yes, but we should try to create a *place* around it; to maximise the river. I think I can give back more to it by doing it this way than by doing it small.' Heseltine ended up by saying yes to both us and the local community. I think Heseltine's thinking was that we, the commercial developer, obviously would find the money and the local community wouldn't. Little did he realise that Ken Livingstone would step in and say: 'Well, the GLC will find the money for the local community.' And the GLC bought the sites.

The worst part about that whole thing, was firstly that it immediately drew up the Left versus Right lines, so I found myself on the Right – which wasn't comfortable, especially after the Pompidou development, and since I had much admired Ken Livingstone. And then there was no central government, no organisation that could look at it in broader strategic terms. It was down to the developer.

There has to be a broader context to make the modern city work. I don't see any signs at all of it in this country. The only people who can do truly far-seeing things are those with the power of patronage, if you like. You've got to have something like the GLC – not small boroughs or private money-oriented commercial organisations.

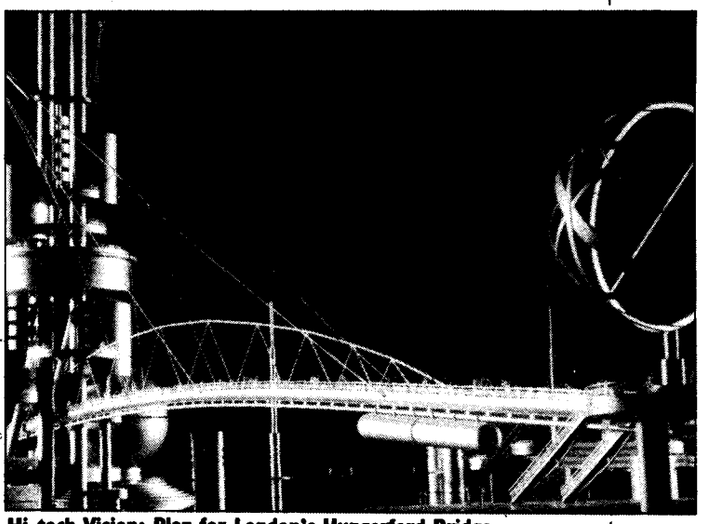
So what's the effect on you of dependence on the patronage of what can only be large developers?

The Royal Docks in London is one of the areas where we do quite a lot of work where there is still a certain amount of pressure being put upon some of the developers to try and produce something which is more than just a straightforward private statement of 'how much money can I go for?' But I think that if you are looking for real patronage, the encouragement has got to come from the state.

And the state isn't going to do it. Does that mean that your clients are inevitably banks or financial institutions?

Yes. There are practically no other clients. I'm just trying to think ... I don't have a public client in this country. But there's an intriguing thing. It's quite clear that France, broadly speaking, is very determined to be a cultural centre of 1992. Mitterrand, certainly is interested in glory, but he is also very clear that if he can make France the leading place, it will end up benefiting financially. We should be looking at why we've got such a mess in this country, and the answer is that we're too profit-motivated and looking too much for short-term returns. The latest attacks from Prince Charles and his entourage have had the effect of camouflaging the problem that they should be examining: which is the ethics of our society and *why* we choose mediocre architects rather than the best?

There was a tremendous interest in building a vast amount at the lowest possible cost in the postwar era, and most serious of all, there was no realisation that you had to maintain those buildings: even more so if you want to



Richard Rogers Partnership

Hi-tech Vision: Plan for London's Hungerford Bridge

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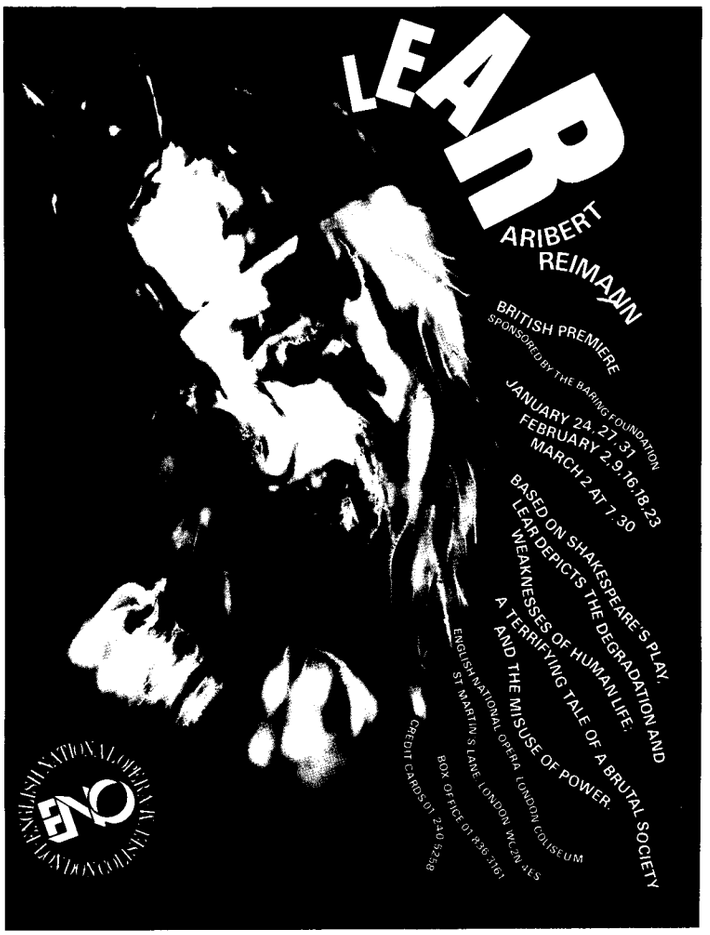
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build cheaply. We dumped all these poor people who'd never lived off ground level into these big blocks, basically cars and tarmac all the way round, and then were surprised that things didn't work. We all have to carry the blame for that, including architects. It's the rotten way we build flats somehow in this country that's created this situation: a poverty of imagination.

So what you're saying is that two distinct things have been conflated? One being maintenance and management, and the other an architectural problem. And what Prince Charles does, by implication, is conflate the two. But he is speaking to commonsense intuitive dissent from what British cities have become. Clearly this is a fantastically important moment for architects and planners. Don't you feel driven to get stuck into the argument?

Well yes, I am.

But in a way in which we don't hear you.

I'm the world's slowest writer. I am quite happy to talk. Prince Charles has taken issue with many individual architects in a way I find very vicious – and very questionable democratically. In fact I think one must question the ethics of the Prince.

Why?

Well, because in the end, how do you argue with a Prince?

You argue.

You try. I've had three meetings cancelled by Buckingham Palace – different discussions like the BBC, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Royal Academy – because it's not a thing the Prince should do. So it's not quite so easy. This is the reason that in the past some countries beheaded their kings! To discuss with the Prince is very, very difficult when everybody is bowing and scraping and bending their knee – in fact it's impossible. If princes want to argue they should stop being princes.

I absolutely agree that the cities are an appalling mess. But as to whether the public like modern architecture or not . . . more people go to the Pompidou Centre than to the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower. Thousands of people go to look at Lloyds – they can't all go there because it's hideous, I hope. So people *are* interested in modern architecture. Of course, it's probably a minority, but the idea of democracy is that minorities should have a chance to say something as well.

Why is 'community architecture' so attractive?

The word community is like, say, 'motherhood'. You can't be against it. But the idea of community architecture is important: it's about quality. There has been a tendency for clients and architects not to take notice of what people want.

So part of this crisis of architecture is about the assumed authority and autonomy of professionals, and that people are demanding a level of accountability?

I don't know. No country has probably such a democratic way of making decisions through elected councillors. But the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 has created the slowest machinery of decision-making in any country I've worked in. This is bureaucracy dulling democracy. Somehow you have to find a way in which participation starts very early on.

If you were, let's imagine, hired by the people living in a housing co-op or a council estate, can you imagine the conditions in which you would make your Lloyd's Building format for those people?

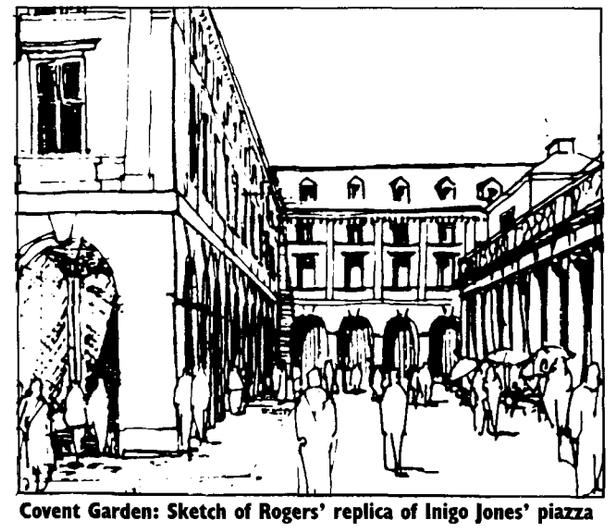
But you are seeing it, if I may say so, as the creative act of the architect, as somebody who approaches the client and says: 'I've got it – it's a Lloyd's Building.' But it isn't at all. It's a very slow process, needing the client's full involvement.

What I am trying to get you to defend is modernist principles, in this atmosphere where there is such a comprehensive retreat from modernism. Given the public debate and people's pessimism, how can people imagine modernism being translated in the local and the domestic context?

But that's because you are looking at the form and what I'm saying is that it wouldn't be the same anyhow. The first thing the Lloyd's people said to us was: 'It won't look like the Pompidou Centre will it?' My answer to that was: 'I've no idea at this point what it will look like.' I approached the problem without any specific form. The Pompidou Centre is more an isolated machine of a building than Lloyd's is. It reflects a certain 60s' consciousness. It was designed in 1971/2 but reflects that whole period, including 1968.

What is it about '68 that is expressed in the building?

I think it's the importance of the community, the whole idea of being anti-monument, the idea that there shouldn't be great entrances, or a great statement about the importance of an institution. It's really a children's climbing frame, into which museums fit rather like drawers, plus a big piazza where people come. It is a big building but it's very open-ended.



Covent Garden: Sketch of Rogers' replica of Inigo Jones' piazza

You are committed to a kind of candour in architecture, that buildings should own up to what they are. There is an argument that this is just another caprice. You put your lifts outside, you say lifts have to be mended after 20 years, and outside makes it easier. Some would say: 'Bullshit, it's just because you like this fancy idea of lifts and services being on the outside.'

I believe that through the legibility of parts, interest is increased and the building is given human scale. Flexibility for growth and change lies at the heart of modern architecture, and some parts have longer lives than others. What we call the 'service elements' have a maximum life of between a few months and 50 years. So if you plug in those elements to the middle of the building, then somehow you're going to have to get at them. Putting them outside also means that your floors have the versatility of a warehouse and can be put to many uses. And then there is also an element of enjoyment: who wants to go in a lift to rub shoulders – even more if you're a small person – with people you don't know in a dark hole! Obviously if you're outside, you have a view. What's as good as a view?

Architecture is about the play of light and shadow on urban form. What is it that interests you when you look down the middle of the street? Why does it interest you? These movements are very, very important. So, the lift is both a glorification of vertical moving, because it's a wonderful thing to do: and in another sense it has a functional purpose. Of course, Lloyds is basically a headquarters building and has a headquarters' building budget. The Pompidou Centre was a really low-cost building: about all we could afford was escalators!

You stress the theme of move-

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ment in buildings as a source of pleasure. But what about a different relationship to movement in public buildings or workplaces, which is to do with privacy, like going to the toilets, or to hide and have a cigarette! Maximum visibility is also maximum surveillance.

Yes, but that's also your decision. It is the job of the architect to translate the needs of the user. I don't need very much privacy. I was born and brought up in open plan, therefore I quite enjoy it. It's like the restaurant downstairs where you can see the food being cooked – I enjoy that, I like the theatre of life. Ruthy loves cooking, and our kitchen's in the middle of the living room, otherwise I'd never talk to her probably if I disappear behind the door. That's my relationship with my wife! It enriches our life.

I had a professor at Yale who wrote a book called *Community And Privacy*, which was really all about privacy. His life was all about privacy. He didn't get on with his kids, and had even more difficulty getting on with his wife, so it was just perfect to have lots of little cells where he could escape. I'm just taking an extreme of course! But the way you run your life gives a certain form to the building.

Now, what does that mean for your visualisation of cities?

The most serious criticism of modern society – and of course architects – is not so much that we have forsaken history, but that we have failed to fully use today's science and technology to solve today's problems. The culture of greed has stopped us achieving what for the first time is possible in a great global society. For example, we and our cities are being destroyed by being servants of the car. We should have technology that can control it, public movement systems so that if the car needs to travel, it should do so in ways which don't force us off our bicycles – or kill us! We haven't been sufficiently sophisticated in using the machinery of the 20th century. I think the 20th century will be remembered for science – it will be remembered for its poverty of ethics as well – and the problem is that of the control of science. Science is a great tool, but it's *how* we use it.

It's very interesting to hear, let's say, Prince Charles saying: 'What we need is an architecture that is sympathetic to nature: classical architecture.' Classical architecture is about the *separation* of nature and building. The sadness about modern architecture is that there were great pioneers in the early-20th century, but because of commercial pressures in the 1920s and 30s we ended up by creating this monster called 'international style' which is an excuse for not thinking about architecture. It's not the failure of the modern movement, the failure is of the architects and the patrons who have isolated just one tiny core of the modern movement, and even that core is now rotten. We have concentrated on the commercial forms of architecture, and these cheap, nasty forms of building we see all over reflect exactly the victory of short-term values: money, over long-term values.

What would the long-term values be?

A humanist city where there is perfect balance between individual needs and public concerns; where a child can roam happily and at peace. If such a society existed, then the architect who builds and designs today's vulgar places for the prevailing society, would design beautiful places, parks, squares, tree-lined avenues and buildings.

Your presentation at the Royal Academy of a pedestrianised heart of the capital followed the GLC's transformation of the South Bank, and with the cheap fares policy, lots of Londoners did begin to feel it was *their* city. Did any politicians or political parties, approach you about the possibility of networks or alliances to pursue a more democratic vision of the capital?

The only politician who came to the opening was Madame Pompidou. ●

Reg Kray: Crime And Punishment

Reg and Ron Kray were convicted for murder in 1969 and sentenced to a minimum of 30 years' imprisonment. Ron Kray is now in Broadmoor and is unlikely to be released. Reg Kray is in Gartree prison in Leicestershire and still hopes that he will be granted parole before the end of the century. They have been the subject of many books. Their autobiography *Reg And Ron Kray, 'Our Story'* was published in 1988. Reg Kray recently submitted this memoir to *Marxism Today*. It is based on a recollection from 1959 when he was in Wandsworth prison and is dedicated to the memory of Flossie Forsyth

His name was Flossie Forsyth. He was just turned 18 years of age and he was due to be hanged by the neck till death. Young Forsyth had been involved in the killing of another teenager on a towpath in the Peckham area of south London. He had been convicted of murder. I could see his shape behind the thick red curtain that covered the cubicle in the right hand corner of the church close to the altar. At the time I was serving 18 months in Wandsworth prison. I had read the kid's case and seen his photo in the daily newspapers. It was the face of a good-looking, blonde-haired kid. Now as I sat in deep thought at the boy's terrible plight, I could not help but feel great pity and sympathy for him. His young life was to be snuffed out like the flame of a flickering candle in a few days time.

I tried to picture his last few days alone in the presence of a group of warders who would watch his every move. They would make sure he would not take his own life. He would have no privacy at all, not even to go through his daily ablutions. I doubt he would get any last urges to masturbate or to think sexual thoughts. The occasional cold stares of the warders would stifle such thoughts or urges in his discomfort and misery. What comfort could he expect from people so cold and distant, even if one or two of them did try to be friendly.

I guess the tears would fall, after all he was just a boy; even a man would shed tears knowing there was no hope. The prison padre would probably visit him so as to offer some solace and words of advice on how Flossie should be brave in the face of his coming death. Everyone wanted things to go smoothly on the day. No fuss or kicking or screams of terror were wanted. The padre too was a total stranger like the wardens. I guess Flossie would have yearned the closeness of his parents' household and remembered how he would get ready to go out with his mates each night to have some fun. It was just one of those kinds of nights that had led to his present predicament and his nightmare existence.

He had gone out for the night to have some fun. They had met another local kid on the towpath on the way to the local dance hall they intended to visit. Though I forget the exact details, remarks were exchanged between Flossie's group and the other kid and a fight started and all joined in because the lone teenager had put up such a fight. This same boy fell to the path where he lay to die. Forsyth and his friends were all eventually arrested and charged with murder. The case was named the 'The Towpath Murder'.

I thought of the victim too and it distressed me that a young life should have been taken. To me they were all victims, there were no victors – they were all losers. I felt sure that none of them

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Press Association

Reg and Ron Kray: Cheated Pierpoint of his guests

thought that tragedy would follow in the wake of their night out. I also thought of the parents of each side and felt great sympathy. I felt like rising from my seat to go to the pulpit and to say aloud: 'Let the kid come with me, I will take care of him. Give him a chance, he is just a teenager. I will straighten him out.'

He was not an evil person or a killer in the true sense of the word. Fights and attacks were common in the Peckham area at this time. This must have weighed heavily against the accused and been a deciding factor of guilt by association with such an area. All these years later I still think of Forsyth and the haunting sight of this slightly-built figure in that box-like cubicle, and of his last thoughts. I could not fathom how someone could place a rope around such a young neck and kill like the killing of a chicken. Why could not justice have been tempered with mercy in the case of one so young? One life lost on the towpath was already one too many. The death of Forsyth did not act as a deterrent – his death was retribution because of a lack of compassion and understanding and the wish to straighten out a young life. We should try to learn and understand as well as judge and condemn. We should look at the causes and effects. Would one stamp on a flower if it began to wilt? Young Forsyth's life was wasted. He became a statistic when he could have been saved. Are we not all guilty, that in our ignorance society has not yet learnt better than to think of the use of a rope!

My brother Ron and I were spared this spectacle by the abolition of hanging and so Pierpoint was cheated of his guests. I guess there were others disappointed too, that Ron and I were not debased by the ritual of the rope. But I ask those who judge to first read *Our Story* by Reg and Ron Kray. Fred Dinenage is the ghost writer. He echoes the thoughts of Ron and I; please read and then conclude if our lives were better for the saving. Above all let us remember the last days of Flossie Forsyth and the lesson learnt that his death did not act as a deterrent.

We should remember some of the details of his last days, of how the ritual would take place in the cold light of day. Young Flossie would be awoken from his restless sleep and the warmth of the grey prison blanket where he lay curled as though seeking the sanctuary once again of his mother's womb. He would then be offered the pleasure of his last request of the choice of meal for breakfast. The anxiety would by this time have built up the bile of his queasy stomach so much so that he would feel physically sick and wish to vomit but, because he had not eaten, his stomach would be too empty to bring anything up.

He felt panic as the warders closed in on him to escort him on his last few steps on shaky legs. He felt faint. Too confused to think his last thoughts, he felt the coarse thick rope round his neck. ●

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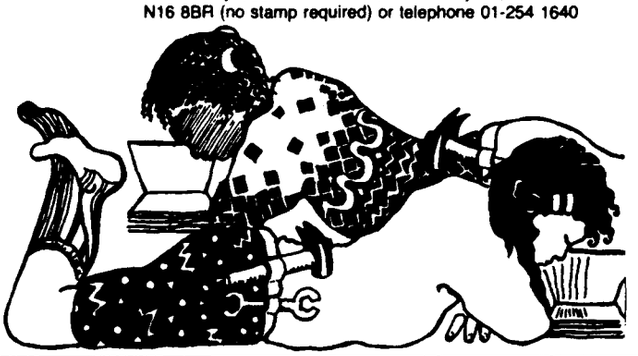

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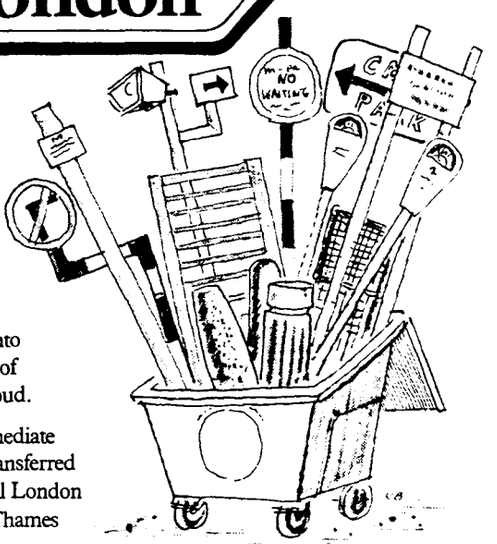

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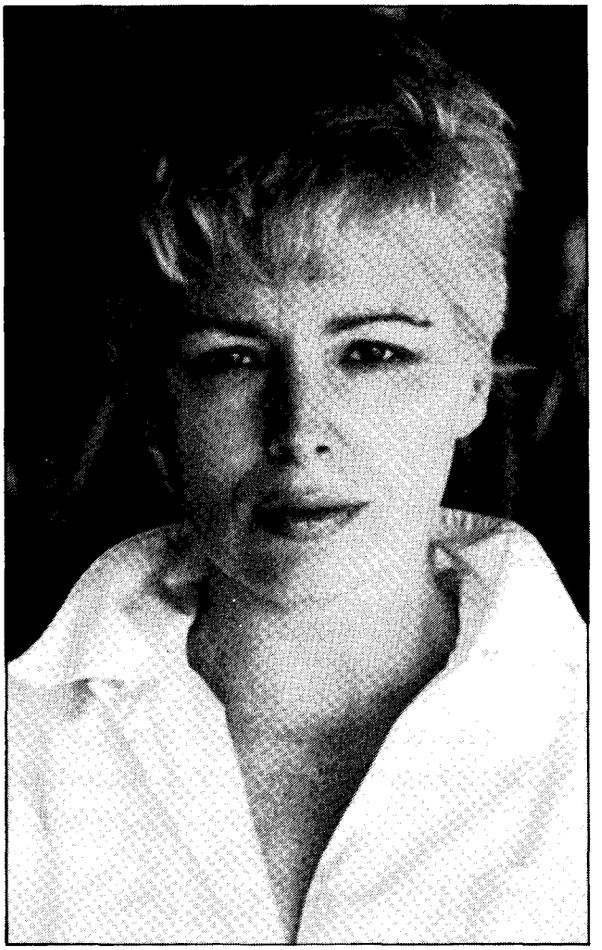
CHOICE WORDS

Celtic Queen

Star of *Letter To Brezhnev*, Margi Clarke, is currently playing Queenie in the BBC series *Making Out*. She talks to Chris Granlund about her life and her reading habits



I'm a print junkie, so I read *everything*. When I was a kid we didn't have any books in our house but even though we didn't read we were taken to the opera. Me uncle Bernie, he's a docker, he's obsessed with the opera and he used to drag us off to *La Bohème*, all the very romantic operas. He'd take us to the Philharmonic recitals in Liverpool and he'd cause murder because he'd be shouting for requests so invariably we'd be turfed out.

All the family are dockers and seafarers and me dad tells great romantic stories. He would say: 'You're really a Celtic queen Margi, but the Celts were socialists and that's why they got fucked off.' And I would ask: 'How do you mean dad?' and he'd say: 'Well, in the domain of the Celts the poor lived with the kings and queens; ate with them, slept under the same roof, sang songs together, got pissed together. And that's why we still say "our" Frank and "our" house; it's a socialist form of language because it's not saying "mine", it's "ours".' Me mother's more practical. She's the Labour councillor who fights for the housing and social services. She'll make sure you don't get cut off with the *leccy*. She's well loved up there and likes a game of bingo. Neither of me parents read really.

I used to love the *Bunty* and I'd do messages on a Saturday so that I could get it every Monday. And I really used to chew on it, read it about ten times, suck the bone dry. I used to go to Birkenhead market with me auntie and I'd go to the comic mart – I used to love *Superman* comics – but mainly it was the people on the market I'd be really interested in. On Sundays at home me mother would put the dinner on, there were ten of us, and we used to be lashed out: 'You get out, get out and play!' We're catholic, you know, and round the corner was the Salvation Army Hall and it was blasphemous for us to go there. But we'd go in anyway and they used to ask us about religion. I was very up on all that because of me mother. Once, when I got asked about David and Goliath, I answered and I won a book. I won *The Famous Five* and that got me reading and I went on to Richmal Crompton, so I started on really middle-class material!

When I was about 18 me brother, Michael, was in London hanging around Piccadilly and that and he said: 'Look kid, if ever you go to a party, here's the books you've read and here's the records you've listened to.' He said: 'You've listened to *Velvet Underground*, you've read Ginsberg, you've read Kerouac.' So he turned me on to all these books. I read *On The Road* and it was an opening, I read Dostoevsky. The greatest thing about books, especially when you're a teenager, is that you might think your head's done in but you can pick up a Russian classic and lo and behold, inside that text is a thought that you've had yourself and it takes away the isolation. I read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when I was about 19, that made a lasting impression. You can never tag Orwell, he's claimed by the Right and by the Left only the liberals have never had the guts to claim him!

I read everything from *Woman's Own* to *Marxism Today*, the *New Statesman*, *Tatler*, *Harpers And Queen* and *Vogue*. I used to steal *Tatler* and *Vogue* back up home, buy a cheap magazine and put it down on top of the expensive one. Hide the loot under the light, that was my motto because that's the last place anyone looks! I love to go to the shops. They're the new cathedrals, no one goes to Mass any more, they go to Tescos. Well, occasionally I go to Mass but I'm more of a Jacobean catholic, I'm a Celtic-druid catholic. The druidic Celts formed an allegiance with catholicism very early on, that's what the Holy Grail is all about. I love to read anything on King Arthur, I love the legends.

I'm writing a book, *Leaving The Twentieth Century*, it'll be considered an important book by the next centurions, not by us because we're in the midst of the pain of it all. I hate the way we are being forced to live in the past with Thatcher's Victorian-age stuff and all the mock-Georgian houses and 40s', 50s', 60s' style shit, I hate it. That's what the book is exploring, the experiences of our generation who are caught at the turnstile of the next century. In a way we have to work with what Thatcher has done, some of it might even be useful but what I find most offensive is its lack of *philosophy*. For Tories, success just means chopping the fucking rungs off the ladder as you go and I don't like that.

There was this guy in Liverpool called Roger Eagle and he was sort of our mentor, he collected people and trained them! Anyway, one day he said to me: 'Margi, have you read *Tiger, Tiger* yet?' And so I read it. It's a great science fiction book by Alfred Bester and everyone read it years ago in Liverpool. It's about the future but not about the usual technology. It's about the technology of the mind and the dawning of the aquarian age. It helps us to make quantum leaps of the mind and I think we should encourage that because they belong to us you know, our minds, they're the most god-given things. ●

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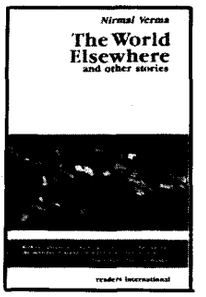

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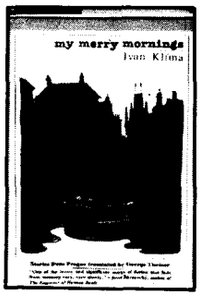

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Mayday, Mayday!

Third term Thatcherism is dedicated to the eradication of socialism from the British cultural scene. In *The Second Time As Farce* David Edgar surveys the scope of this assault and searches for a viable cultural offensive for the Left. Mark Fisher, shadow minister for arts and media, surveys the cultural battleground

Mrs Thatcher's political tanks are advancing over our culture. After a decade of laying siege to the arts and trying to starve them into submission, she is about to begin her major assault on the redoubt of public service broadcasting.

David Edgar's book of 16 essays surveys the scope and significance of this battleground. In his introduction, 'Thoughts For A Third Term', he charts the progress of Thatcherite strategy. Having tackled manufacturing industry, the economy, local authorities and the trade unions in her first two terms, she is now turning her withering, Medusa eye on our culture.

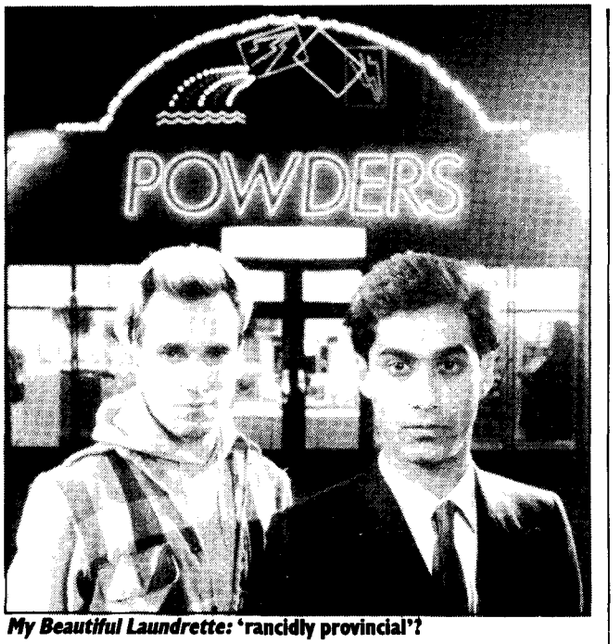
The war-like metaphors are not inappropriate. She has made it very clear that her priority is the final destruction of socialism. She knows that the arts and media are among the few public arenas in which her writ does not run. In spite of her economic and political victories she has not yet won the battle of ideas. Since cultural values are the DNA of society, she needs to purge our culture of any socialist influence if her political revolution is to last.

David Edgar provides a sharp critique of the background to this assault. Four pieces, 'On The Right', cover the racism and politics of the National Front, which were the subject of his stageplay, *Destiny*, and examine the polemics of contributors to the new Right periodical, the *Salisbury Review*, such as Roger Scruton, Maurice Cowling and Mrs Thatcher's biographer, Patrick Cosgrove. They make a charming bunch of bigots. For Scruton, democracy can be 'discarded without detriment to the civil well-being as the conservative conceives it'. Norman Podnoretz defines feminism and homosexuality as a form of plague. Their approach to the arts is revealed in Norman Stone's *Sunday Times* article of January 1988 where he attacks *My Beautiful Laundrette* and other British films as 'tawdry, ragged, rancidly provincial'.

We may take some comfort from the pathetic incompetence of Mr Stone's writing ('rancidly provincial'?) but at the same time we should recognise that such outpourings are influencing what passes for this government's cultural thinking. As David Edgar says, we are 'dealing with a world which is, sadly, not teetering on the edge of rational order'. It is a world which, as he wryly notes, has given us the 'new British musical', dazzling in form, empty in content. 'Cats is about small furry domestic animals' while 'one of the stars of *Time* is a hologram and the other is Cliff Richard'.

At the heart of this book are essays in which David Edgar considers how this cultural struggle has been reflected in the performing arts generally, and in writing for the theatre and for television in particular. He is an ideal person to do so, having been politically active as a playwright throughout the 1970s and 80s, first with touring companies and later writing plays such as *Mary Barnes*, *Maydays* and *Entertaining Strangers* for the Royal Court, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre.

He addresses the central problems facing the political playwright. What role is there for such a writer? Why, since the theatre has been the main arena for political radicalism in the arts in post-war Britain, have the artistic and the political avant garde failed habitually to combine? What sort of play can best 'grapple with the stories of our times'?



***My Beautiful Laundrette:* 'rancidly provincial'?**

Weighing up the potential of agitprop, naturalism, social realism and the popular touring theatre pioneered by John McGrath with 7:84, he finds them all wanting. Instead he makes an interesting case for the community play as carnival, based on his experience of writing *Entertaining Strangers* for Ann Jellicoe in Dorchester, and then transferring it to the National Theatre.

He argues that, drawing on diverse traditions (Notting Hill/festa/welfare state performance), carnival can break down the divisions between participants and spectators. In doing so it offers a new flexibility and the chance to challenge and upend hierarchies. However, he does recognise the problem of how to incorporate 'the sophistication and complexity of the fully realised theatrical text with the energy and immediacy' of carnival.

This book establishes David Edgar as a major essayist on the Left, prepared to take on big issues. You put it down reluctantly, hoping that he will soon write more on related subjects. What future for black and feminist theatre companies? What can we learn from political theatre in Europe, in Africa or in Southern America? What will be the impact on drama of cable and satellite?

In her third term Mrs Thatcher is determined to use every available means to limit debate and expression in our culture. She wants a theatre solely concerned with celebration, that doesn't challenge, disturb or dissent. She wants a broadcasting system that lullabies us, not one that makes us sit up and ask questions. Having softened up her targets with the demands of market forces, she is now beginning to introduce her main authoritarian weapons, Clause 28, the Broadcasting Standards Council and a new broadcasting bill.

In **The Second Time As Farce** (Lawrence and Wishart, £12.95 hbk) David Edgar leads the way in opposing the mean times of Thatcherism. He reminds us that 'theatre is not just about what is, but what could be'. But there is an ambiguity in that last phrase. It gives us hope for the future, at the same time as delivering a warning. The political tanks of Thatcherite reaction and authoritarianism are rolling. They must be turned back. ●

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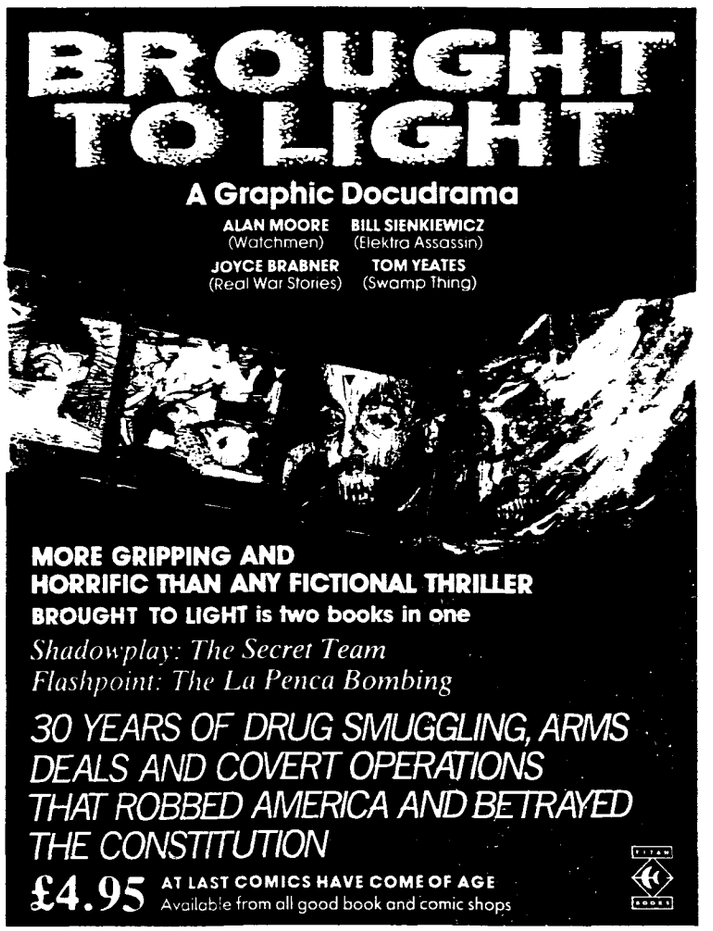
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New Vision

Female Spectators: Looking At Film And Television
E. Deirdre Pribram Verso
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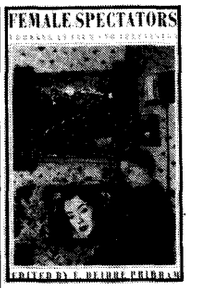


The focus of much early feminist film criticism was the deeply-rooted patriarchal ideology in the structures of popular narrative film. Laura Mulvey, along with other feminist critics, found psychoanalysis, in conjunction with other post-structuralist theories, particularly effective for the deconstruction of the unconscious, as well as the conscious, pleasures Hollywood film offered to the male spectator. The conclusions of this early model of feminist film criticism were rather bleak: 'woman' was 'there to be looked at', on display for the voyeuristic and fetishistic pleasures of the male gaze.

How then were we to understand women's participation and pleasure in the cinema? **Female Spectators** is the latest in a series of books which address this question. Accurately billed as a 'state of the art' anthology of 1980s' feminist film criticism, it challenges the textual determinism and ahistoricism of the earlier psychoanalytic criticism. Instead it analyses the processes of female spectatorship, determined not only by gender, but also by race, class, historical context and political consciousness.

Female Spectators brings together a refreshing set of combinations: sociology and film studies, text and context, film theorists and film makers. Christine Gledhill emphasises the importance of the distinction between the *textual* and the *social* subject for a feminist understanding of the processes of female spectatorship. Drawing on recent approaches to popular culture, she offers the Gramscian concept of 'negotiation' to analyse the complex interaction of text, reader and context, arguing that cultural meanings are always contradictory and actively negotiated.

Taking her usual difficult but stimulating approach, Teresa de Lauretis challenges some of the basic assumptions of feminist uses of Lacanian psychoanalysis. In rethinking the question of feminist aesthetics, she produces an analysis of Lizzie Borden's *Born In Flames* and argues that we need to analyse how films 'address the spectator as female' and to develop an 'aesthetic of reception'. She focuses on a theme which runs throughout the collection; the differences between 'woman' on the screen and women in the audience, and indeed the differences *among* women in the audience.

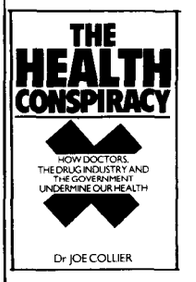
In what is, surprisingly, the only ethnographic piece in this collection, Jacqueline Bobo highlights the implications of cultural differences between women as spectators of Spielberg's *The Color Purple*. Her analysis challenges some of the widespread criticisms of the film, looking instead at black women's pleasures as spectators culturally marginal to popular cinema. This emphasis on the importance of cultural and historical context for feminist film criticism is one of the book's greatest strengths and is developed in several chapters. Notably, Linda Williams looks at Michael Curtiz's 1945 film *Mildred Pierce* in the context of the second world war, suggesting the specificity of its meaning for women in 1945.

While this collection challenges many of the problems of the earlier psychoanalytic approaches to popular cinema, many of the articles demonstrate the need for further rethinking in this area of feminist work. Some of the articles, in fact, have a rather tenuous link to the question of female spectatorship producing a rather uneven anthology which does not offer a coherent new framework. Indeed, in turning away from psychoanalysis towards cultural theorists such as Gramsci, Jameson and Hall for an understanding of spectators as agents of history, rather than mere victims of ideology, we are in danger of losing sight of the specificity of patriarchy. Perhaps the pull of psychoanalysis was its ability to explain the detailed workings of patriarchy in film and certainly feminists have not yet found an alternative for this project. ●

Jackie Stacey

Down On Drugs

The Health Conspiracy
Dr Joe Collier
Century Hutchinson
£4.95 pbk



The best critics tend to be insiders. But insiders prepared to be public critics tend to be rare in the complex mesh of relationships between government, industry and doctors that in combination decide which of the £2billion or so of drugs a year that we swallow or inject.

People like Dr Joe Collier, a clinical pharmacologist at the St George's teaching hospital are thus worth their weight in gold. For Collier understands drugs, the way his colleagues work, the way the government regulates them and the way the industry functions and behaves. And he doesn't much like what he sees.

For years he has been a determined critic of the way the industry promotes its products, of the secrecy which surrounds decisions on the marketing and safety of drugs, of the increasing financial links – both personal and in terms of dependence on research cash – between doctors and the drug companies. In **The Health Conspiracy** , he sets out to show how doctors, the drug industry and the government undermine our health. It is a pretty convincing case.

The book is strongest when it deals with what Collier knows best – drugs. It is weakest when he broadens his thesis into a more generalised attack on the government's handling of the NHS. When he strays into breast cancer screening, for example, he lambasts the staged introduction of screening. But in practice, expanding breast cancer screening too fast, without the huge training effort needed to teach both radiographers and radiologists the necessary skills, would be more than likely to do more harm than good – leading to unnecessary biopsies and fear.

In a sense this is nitpicking. Pharmaceuticals are Collier's main target. And in a populist and accessible assault he sets out the case that change is badly needed. Names are named,and there are hard examples to back the argument, some of which lead you to hope that Century Hutchinson's libel lawyers have done a good job.

His conclusions include the need to end the Department of Health's role as a double agent, charged with the task both of promoting the industry's profitability and of ensuring drug safety. The functions should be separated.

New drugs should only be marketed when they are shown to be genuinely better than what is already available. Misleading advertisements should be dealt with under powers ministers already have but scarcely ever use. And the limited list – the list of drugs for which the NHS will pay – should be extended across all categories of medicines.

Patients have a key role in all this, Collier argues; demanding information and shouldering more responsibility for reporting side-effects, while being willing to volunteer for drug trials in return for an effective no-fault compensation scheme when things go wrong.

It is a challenging agenda, and much of it is achievable. But given the multi-national nature of the industry, one is left wondering how much of the industry Britain would have left if everything Collier advocates happened here, but not elsewhere at the same time. ●

Nicholas Timmins

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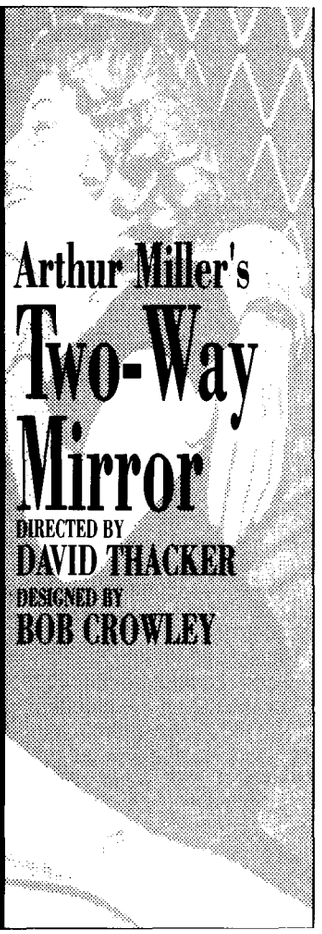

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Oprah Buffs

The first lady of US television, Oprah Winfrey, enlivens millions of lives with desperate concern for other people's tragedies and perversions. Paul Morley explains why she could only happen in America

Oprah Winfrey: The spirit of Liz Taylor crossed with Joan of Arc

I know four things for sure about Oprah Winfrey. 1) Spelt backwards, her first name is Harpo. This might be a cheeky, affectionate reference to her exploding hair, or an ironic, cheeky reference to the fact that she's at her happiest when she's talking, whether it's about Liz Taylor's drug problems or how the size of your feet relates to your sex drive. 2) In the *Forbes' Magazine*'s top forty entertainment earners for 1988, Winfrey was 11th, earning $25m; the top female, just behind Bill Cosby and Eddie Murphy and way ahead of Paul Hogan and Frank Sinatra. 3) Despite her wealth, Oprah is firm that she is unspoilt: 'When I get home after a hard day at work, I do just what everyone else does.' This means, of course, slipping into the towelling robe, slopping into the old slippers, and crashing on to the settee with a cocoa to watch *Dynasty*.

Oprah has defined what the *common* American is about – soaped up to the eyeballs, furiously fascinated with other people's love, drug and diet problems, passionately serious about looking and feeling good, obsessed to the point of condescension with people who live their lives a different way to what is accepted as the American way, fond of a good freak story, very vaguely aware that the USA is not alone in the world, worried more than anything about Bruce Willis's erection and Cher's bizarre love triangle. Oprah was so common, so vulgar, so in tune with the way that America decides to mix up cheap psychology and simple solutions to 20th-century collapse with expensive, extravagant *enjoyment* that her fame was fated and probably even necessary.

4) As successful as she could get, rich to the artificial point of immortality, she then proved her common touch by dieting, publicly and proudly. Along with Bush v Dukakis and Tyson v Tyson, Oprah's diet was one of the most important things that happened in America in 1988. Not only had she made it, changed what she was, now she had changed how she looked. She lost 67 pounds in four months. A nation of commoners was inspired, Oprah was saying – anything is possible! As long as it's to do with taking off weight, or getting off drugs, or eradicating premature ejaculation, or leaving your husband because he beats you . . . What else is there?

We have similar shows to Winfrey's in this country: the early morning battering of the senses meant to alert us to the world's quirks and terrors, group discussions meant to make us feel less alone and even a little useful. These are hosted by plain white men, failed politicians or failed Michael Aspels like Kilroy-Silk and Michael Scott. We have these worry shows, these vicarious, topical, let's-find-out shows, because they have them in America. Because America speaks a similar language to us, it's usually decided that our tv shows could be similar to their's. America may speak a similar language to us, but it's the most *foreign* country in the world. America has shows like Winfrey's because the commoners there are happy to share – their fears, their opinions, their obsessions. The audiences demonstrate a kind of furious, willing, debased confidence that British audiences could never display. Oprah is always at the centre of a group of people who want to take part.

A Kilroy show is half an hour of hesitancy and half-hearts, whether they're discussing air crashes or pornography. *The Time, The Place* is invariably giggly mildness, there's genuine intention from the host, the guests, the audience, to be reasonable, to come to informative conclusions. It's all very nice, but nothing really happens, not even as entertainment. Everyone's scared to be *themselves*. Kilroy-Silk or Scott could never become famous out of these shows, because their audiences don't have this unashamed drive to be famous *themselves*. Oprah's fame comes out of the combined greed of everyone who has ever appeared on her show to be noticed as something different, unique – she has taken it all for herself and channelled it into $25m a year. Fame and glamour because of her audience's fantasy.

Watching a show like Oprah Winfrey from inside our consistent meekness, we probably feel that we are watching a nation burning up with responses to itself. The people who make many of our programmes are jealous of this mental, emotional self-absorption, seeing a place where tv truly is at the centre of things. As we move into the cabled 90s there will be many attempts to match the tempo of this American life. The trouble is, we are just not made for it, we don't have the urge to make ourselves into anything. We're happy just to sit and watch, to feel that we're not really involved, hoping that troubles might just pass us by. We're embarrassed when we appear on television. Oprah Winfrey could never have invented herself in such a climate, so really I suppose I know five things for sure about Oprah Winfrey. 5) She could never happen here. *Caution* would have denied her. Not even if she were a cross between Cilla Black, Thatcher and Gloria Hunniford would we allow her to be so exposed, so exaggerated, so *created*. Although, funnily enough, if you did mix up Black, Thatcher and Hunniford, you'd find that the hair would be exactly as exuberant as Oprah's. This is what's known as a minor 20th-century miracle. Just like Oprah herself. ●

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Larry and Chris' met via these columns 1987. Marrying Feb' 1989. So nil desperandum MT HEARTS!

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● **Scotland:** The "What's Left" Collective organises Marxism Today events in Scotland. If you would like to join the collective or for details of future events phone: (041) 339 5022.

● **Oxford:** New Marxism Today Discussion Group formed, details of meetings from Geoff Andrews, 49 Walton St, Oxford Tel (0865) 52835.

● **Liverpool:** Marxism Today seminar on choice, markets and planning. Saturday January 28. Speakers include Charlie Leadbeater and Pat Devine. Full details from Merseyside CP, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool 1.

● **Kensington:** Marxism Today Discussion Group meetings held every month. Details, phone (01) 229 7456.

● **Leeds:** Marxism Today presents "New Times in Yorkshire" on Saturday March 4 at Leeds TUC Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7. A full day of debate, workshops, exhibitions and creche. Speakers include Martin Jacques, Beatrix Campbell, Charlie Leadbeater, Gordon McLennan, Vicky Seddon, Richard Caborn M.P. and Michael Meadowcroft. For programme contact the organisers, Yorkshire District CPGB, Leeds TUC Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7. Tel: (0532) 626343.

● **Lancaster:** Marxism Today Event planned for the Spring. For details contact, Paul Bagguley, 25 Lune St, Skerton, Lancaster.

● **Dundee/Tayside:** "Marxism Today: Communism or Consumerism?" Discussion meeting on January 29. For details contact (0382) 644385. Organised by Dundee/Tayside Marxism Today Group.

● **Birmingham:** Marxism Today event on Saturday March 4. Ideas and helpers wanted, contact (021) 443 2184.

● **Middlesbrough:** "What's Left in Cleveland". Saturday April 15, at St Marys Centre, Corporation Rd, Middlesbrough. A full day of discussions, exhibitions and entertainment. Organised by Teeside CP in association with Marxism Today. Details: (0642) 827499.

● **Wolverhampton:** Marxism Today discussion group meets third Tuesday every month, CCR building, 2, Clarence Rd, Wolverhampton. 7.30pm.

● **York:** Marxism Today discussion group meets fortnightly. Details (0904) 33936.

● **North London:** "New Times, New Thinking" A Day of Discussion at Caxton House, St Johns Way, Islington, London N19. On Saturday February 11, 10-5pm. Speakers include Stuart Hall, Beatrix Campbell, Robin Murray, Chris Smith and Frances Morrell. For full programme phone (01) 348 8915 or write to North London Marxism Today Forum, 151 Stapleton Hall Rd, London N4 4RB.

● **Leeds:** "Postmodernism" Open Discussion with John Christie of Leeds University Philosophy Dept. Thursday Feb 16, 8pm at Leeds Trades Council Club – Tom Mann Room. All welcome, for more info phone (0532) 435150. Organised by Leeds Marxism Today Discussion Group.

● **Harrow:** Marxism Today Discussion Group recently formed. For details of forthcoming meetings phone (01) 427 0266 or write to Harrow MT, 36 Aberdeen Rd, Wealdstone, Middx.

● **Haringey:** "The Drama of New Times". Discussion on politics and culture with Colin Chambers, author of a forthcoming book on Unity Theatre. Tuesday February 21, 8pm at Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, Crouch End, London N8. Details: (01) 348 8915. Organised by Haringey Marxism Today Discussion Group.

EVENTS

● **Viraj Mendis** Defence Campaign – National March Sat. 4th February. Assemble 12 noon Crown Square Manchester. Contact (061) 234 3168.

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NEW SOCIALIST

New Socialist and Marxism Today wish to draw readers' attention to an ERROR which appears in the advertisement for the conference, "Europe, Our Common Home" on page 22 of this issue. **The prices for this event are £15 and £10, and NOT £30 and £20.** Additional speakers are: Bernard Cassen (European Editor of Le Monde Diplomatique) and Paul Scheffer (Dutch Labout Party).

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Contributors

Dr John Gribbin is now completing a major book about the greenhouse effect. His latest book *The Hole In The Sky* (Corgi) deals with the destruction of the ozone layer.
Alice Rawsthorn is a journalist on the *Financial Times*.
Rob Hughes is a GP and national co-ordinator of the MPU.
Jeremy Cherfas is a biologist and writer, and life science consultant to *New Scientist*.
Ian Neary is a politics lecturer at Newcastle University.
John McCarry is a member of the *What's Left In Scotland* collective.
Tricia Davis is a trade union official and a member of the *Marxism Today* editorial board.
Dave Green is the London district secretary of the Communist Party. For participants in the roundtable discussion see page 16.
Fred Halliday is professor of international relations at the London School of Economics.
Göran Therborn is professor of sociology at Gothenburg University and the author of *Why Some People Are More Unemployed Than Others* (Verso).
Richard Rogers is an architect.
Beatrix Campbell is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, and a member of the *Marxism Today* editorial board.
Reg Kray is serving a 30-year sentence in Gartree prison, Leicestershire.
Paul Morley will be an occasional presenter of BBC2's new arts programme, *The Late Show*.
Mark Fisher is shadow minister for the arts and media and MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central.
Jackie Stacey teaches women's studies and media studies in the sociology department at the University of Lancaster.
Nicholas Timmins is *The Independent*'s health service correspondent.
Margi Clarke is an actress and writer.
Chris Granlund is a freelance writer of lists.
Noll Scott is a journalist on *The Guardian* and a writer on Latin America.

Additional contributions to this issue:
Production: Abigail Fletcher, John Gawthrop, James Goodman, Roy Gordon, Bridget Henderson, Kevin Nicholson, Rachel O'Brien, Joe Painter, Neil Partrick, Chris Pate, Gary Pleasance, Tulip Tuitt, Ben Whittam-Smith, Kieron Wincer, Gillian Woodward.
Promotion Richard Barnes, Roy Blockley.

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Fidel Castro

In a light moment during the first year of the Cuban revolution, one of Fidel Castro's comrades proposed that the Caribbean island should declare war on the United States. 'Why on earth would we do that?' asked Castro. 'Because Japan and Germany lost the second world war and look how wealthy they have become,' came the answer. 'Yes', said Fidel, 'But what if we win?'

In the event, it was the Americans who took the fight to Cuba, as they were later to do to Nicaragua. And 30 years on, leading his revolution into its fourth decade, he is able to look back and proclaim, not just survival, but a kind of victory.

In those years he has ensured health and education services of a standard that is rightly the envy of the Third World. He has played the decisive role in events of such international significance as the Bay of Pigs (1961) and the military defeat of South Africa in Angola. He has won the respect of statesmen and the adulation of millions, especially in Latin America.

Yet while his place on the world stage has been so prominent, throughout that time the 'real Fidel' has remained a deliberate mystery. He has neither official residence nor any family life apart from a son by a pre-revolutionary marriage. His ex-wife lives in the US and is fiercely anti-Castro. The son, 'Fidelito', now middle-aged, is the head of the country's atomic energy authority, in charge of building the Caribbean's first nuclear power station.

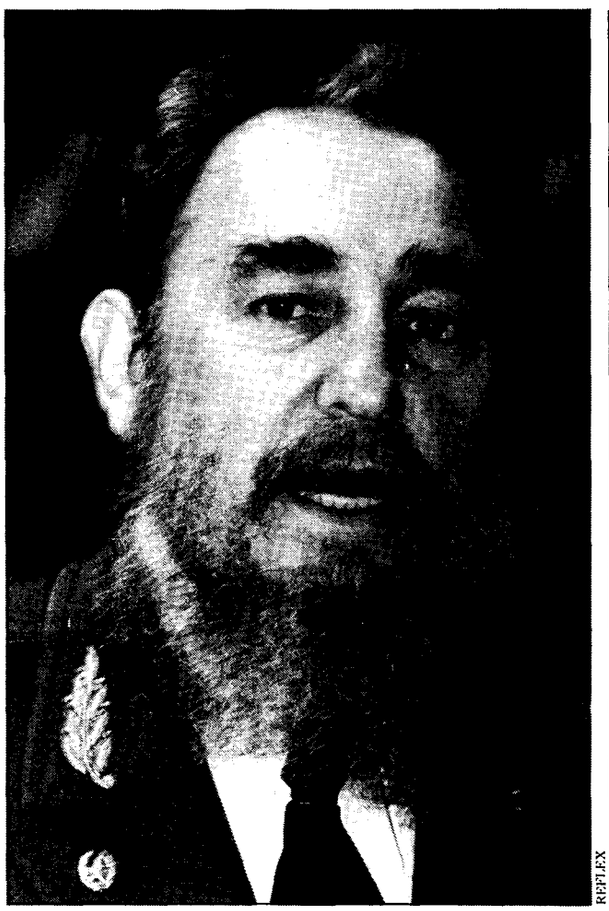
In fact, his private life is less hidden than non-existent, so completely has he subsumed himself in his life's work, the Cuban revolution. Surrounded by his retinue of advisers and researchers, he acts as Cuba's round-the-clock custodian of revolutionary progress with an energy, enthusiasm, depth of knowledge, power of concentration and air of political authority that never fail to impress those who see him in action.

Most impressive of all, however, are his famous skills as an orator, his ability to keep a crowd of up to two million in his thrall for hour after hour. Yet the Shakespearean scale of his delivery is curiously unsuited to the television era in which he lives. In a country much of whose physical and psychological furniture bears the imprint of the 1950s, its decade of insurrection, the leader's public style, too, can look dated – though Castro's sheer power and charisma gives it instead more an aura of timelessness.

The oratory will be sorely tested over the coming months and years, since the Cuban president is today facing the sternest test of his political sway among his people. As Cuba celebrates its revolutionary anniversary, there is increasing popular dissatisfaction with the stagnant economy. In the past, this has always managed to deliver at least small improvements with the passing of the years. Now, for the first time since the heady days of the 1960s, expectations are having to adjust to zero and negative growth, for the foreseeable future. Rarely have Cubans been so lacking in civic confidence.

At the same time, in the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev's recent non-visit to Cuba, significant numbers of intellectuals can be heard privately regretting their *commandante*'s public rejection of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. To some Western commentators it does seem that Castro is lagging behind the times. Many have succumbed to the temptation of effectively dismissing him as a once-romantic dictator whose arteries have hardened.

The case against Castro, being made increasingly vociferously from abroad, focuses, above all, on his resistance to *perestroika*. It is a line of thought which should be handled with care. What can seem merely stubborn to First World eyes makes more sense from the perspective of a Third World country in straightened circumstances.



REFLEX

Fidel Castro: An aura of timelessness

Castro has made it abundantly clear that he regards Cuba's ultimate destination as economic integration and political unity with Latin America. *Perestroika*, by contrast, is the economic means whereby the Soviet Union is attempting to take its place in the First World. The concept has, he argues, little relevance to the needs of Third World countries where the redistribution of wealth, both within countries and vis-a-vis the developed world, remains the central issue.

In fact, there are many signs that Gorbachev himself is far more interested in using his contacts with Castro to extend his influence in the Non-Aligned Movement than to tick him off over economic principles. In his historic December speech to the United Nations, the Soviet leader clearly intended his announced cancellation of all Third World debts to Moscow to be followed up by a speech delivered in Havana two days later at which he would expand on his Third World policies.

As the outlines of the new international order ushered in by Mr Gorbachev become clearer, it is against shifts in the Third World in general, and Latin America in particular, that Fidel Castro believes Cuba's prospects are to be measured. Castro may be proved wrong for his determination that Cuba should go it alone economically. But it would be a brave person – and there are plenty around – who would dismiss him as a wrong-headed fool. ●

Noll Scott

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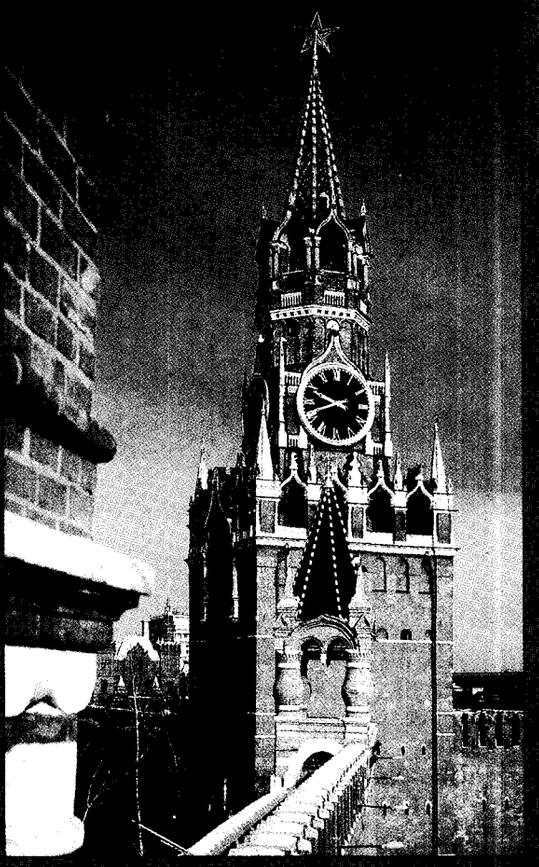

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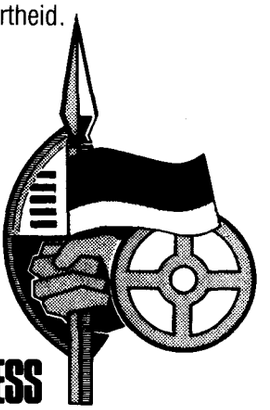

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